

603512

**TWENTY HUMAN
MONSTERS**



CALIGULA

TWENTY HUMAN MONSTERS

IN PURPLE AND IN RAGS

FROM CALIGULA TO LANDRU

A.D. 12—A.D. 1922

By

PHILIP BEAUFOY BARRY

AUTHOR OF

"TWELVE MONSTROUS CRIMINALS," "THE WORLD'S WORST CRIMINALS,"
"SINNERS DOWN THE CENTURIES," ETC.

"There is such a thing as active positive Evil, which for all practical purposes may be defined as being what it seems to be—an external malignant power that seeks to ruin our souls."

*From a sermon preached by the Very Rev. W. R. Inge, D.D.,
at Chelsea Parish Church on the 24th February, 1929.*

JARROLD'S *Publishers* LONDON
Limited, 34 Paternoster Row, E.C.4

Printed in Great Britain at
The Mayflower Press, Plymouth. William Brendon & Son, Ltd.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I WOULD like to thank very cordially my friends, Mr. W. G. Gilbee and Mr. and Mrs. James Sinclair, for several stimulating suggestions which I have tried to elaborate in the pages that follow.

P. B. B.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following, among other books, have been consulted :—

- Lives of the Cæsars. (Suetonius.)
History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages. (H. C. Lea.)
History of the most Notorious Highwaymen, Pirates, and Cut-throats. (Charles Johnson.)
Brigands and Bandits. (D. Roccapino.)
The Newgate Calendar.
Twelve Bad Men. (Thomas Seccombe.)
Studies of French Criminals. (H. B. Irving.)
Some Notable Criminals. (H. B. Irving.)
The Female Offender. (C. Lombroso.)
Mysteries of Crime and Detection. (Arthur Griffiths.)
The Criminal. (H. Havelock Ellis.)
Psychology of Vice and Crime. (B. Hollander.)
Landru. (William Le Queux.)
The Dictionary of National Biography.
The Dictionary of Universal Biography.

APOLOGIA

THIS is not a book for the squeamish. When a writer sets out to write about horrible persons, he does not deal with rosewater and pleasant Sunday afternoons. The seeker after pleasant pages must look elsewhere.

Equally, this book makes small appeal to those whose reading appetites seek the stimulant of the mysterious. The ingenuous lover of detective fiction will find in the pages of his pet authors mysteries that outweigh in thrill and suspense the actual crimes of the *Newgate Calendar*.

In this book I have set down a record of evil—of crimes carefully planned—of crimes recklessly planned—of crimes urged by greed, jealousy, revenge, hatred, fear, malice, cruelty. I have assembled the very rich and the very poor—the prince and the tramp. They will seem an incongruous crew at first glimpse, and yet they are congruous enough when the keynote of the characters of all of them is sounded. That keynote is egotism run mad mingled with indifference to suffering.

To the superficial critic, these records will seem a mere assemblage of horrors. To the student of life and motive to whom (as the student of science) nothing is alien and nothing is disgusting, they will perhaps appeal as documents, proving that the parentage of the ape and tiger still survive in the criminals of our unconvincing civilization.

PHILIP BEAUFOY BARRY

LONDON,

April, 1929

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>Frontispiece</i> FACING PAGE
CALIGULA	48
GILLE DE LAVAL SEIGNEUR DE RAIS	88
ALICE ARDEN OF FAVERSHAM	96
“MOLL CUTPURSE”	120
JONATHAN WILD	124
JONATHAN WILD DISCOVERS DARRELL IN THE LOFT	124
JONATHAN WILD THROWING SIR ROWLAND TRENCHARD DOWN THE WELL-HOLE	128
JOHN SHEPPARD, 1702-1724	136
JONATHAN WILD SEIZING JACK SHEPPARD AT HIS MOTHER'S GRAVE IN WILLESDEN CHURCHYARD	140
GOW KILLING THE CAPTAIN	152
LACENAIRE	208
DR. PRITCHARD	224
JEAN B. TROPPEMAN	240
MICHAEL EYRAUD	256
GABRIELLE BOMPARD	264
LANDRŪ	272

TWENTY HUMAN MONSTERS

GAIUS CÆSAR CALIGULA

WITH the passing of Augustus, the first symptom of the loss of freedom that followed the establishment of an imperial throne in Rome was the inevitable symptom of tyranny. Augustus, it is true, reigned wisely and tolerantly, but he inaugurated an autocracy that speedily asserted itself for evil. The old Roman independence died: the Roman character, weakened and vitiated many years previously by its association with the Greeks, was ready to yield to domination. Whilst many nominal symbols of freedom still survived, the Empire was ruled by one man.

The origin of the word "tyrant" is illuminating. Derived from the Greek word "turannos," it originally signified merely an absolute ruler. Thus, a man possessed of all the virtues of a saint—the wisest, the most benignant person—would have been technically called a tyrant. But words, like men, have a tendency to degenerate. Rarely do words in their pilgrimage through the centuries assume virtues that they did not originally possess. The reverse is the rule. They begin well, like men, and, like men, they end badly. Because the possession of absolute power in the hands of frail humanity became a thing of evil, the word Tyrant has for many ages held one meaning, and that meaning an evil one.

The first absolute rulers of a hitherto free Roman

people were, with a few exceptions, men of appalling lives. Nero is perhaps the most spectacular of Imperial monsters for three reasons. He murdered his mother, he played the violin (or was said to have played it) whilst his city was in flames, and he was the first man actively to persecute the Christians. But Tiberius, Commodus, Caracalla and, above all, Caligula, were no better. One cannot measure wickedness with a yard measure, but it may be said without hesitation that when one comes to ponder the records of these people there is little to choose between them.

Gaius Cæsar Caligula (the "Caligula" was a nickname, meaning a soldier's boot) was born in A.D. 12. His father, Germanicus, an admirable soldier and a fine character throughout, had been named by the Emperor Tiberius as his successor. Agrippina, a daughter of Germanicus, became at a later time the mother of the notorious Nero.

A fierce love of cruelty developed in Caligula when he was a boy. He enjoyed attending public executions. A scourging on the grand scale excited in him a glee that horrified even the hardened spectators. In his lighter moments he made himself at home in houses of ill-fame, in low taverns.

Germanicus died abroad, fighting one of Rome's "little wars." It is probable that Tiberius contrived his death or at least connived at the assassination. Tiberius, half insane in his later years, was subject to sudden and inexplicable revulsions against men whom he had loved. In A.D. 37 poetical justice was satisfied

by the murder of Tiberius himself. In this murder Caligula was said by some people to have been concerned. If this was indeed the fact, it did not weaken the eloquence of Caligula when he made the funeral oration upon the tomb of the Emperor. His rhetoric was admirable, and indeed throughout his life he was a fine orator, prizing the arts of the speaker, the singer, and the dancer above the more solid and subtle arts of the poet and the philosopher.

The first eight months of his reign were distinguished by many excellent acts. To celebrate his accession to the throne, Caligula pardoned and released a large number of political and civil offenders, bringing back from exile many who had been banished during the time of Tiberius. Posing quite honestly as a reformer and a guardian of public morals, he expelled from the city sorcerers, panders, courtezans, and the inventors of certain strange immoral practices. He endeavoured to sharpen the taste of his subjects for good literature. He extended the Courts of Justice, increased the number of judges, and upheld sane and beneficial administration. He renewed temples that were decaying—built new temples, and for the space of those eight months played the part of a perfect ruler. In precisely the same way Nero, many years afterwards, began his reign with every promise of a happy and just government.

Then, suddenly, with apparently nothing to explain—nothing to justify the transfiguration, the change came. As Suetonius (that most picturesque, if not most reliable, of historians) has written: "Thus far

forth had Caligula fared as a prince—now henceforward must we speak of a monster ! ”

The first outstanding symptom of his new development was a mania for grandeur and pomp. Caligula proceeded to bestow upon himself resounding titles. He called himself among other things “ The Father of Hosts,” “ The Greatest—The Most Excellent Cæsar.” His next action was one that in former days before religion had lost a serious hold upon the people would, probably, have led to his deposition. Even then, when religion was openly sneered at, or at best regarded with indifference by many people, his deed roused enormous indignation. For he ordered that the images of certain gods should be mutilated. The heads were to be struck off. His own head was to be placed upon the shoulders of the images. There is no doubt that Caligula, obsessed by vanity and by the sudden accession of despotic power, was irked to see the images of deities who were nominally greater in importance than himself. Unable to strike at their alleged power and majesty, he struck like a foolish schoolboy at their graven images.

Caligula, after the custom of all tyrants, lived in a state of everlasting fear regarding the safety of his throne. Fearing a rival in his brother Tiberius, he presently contrived the boy’s murder. A squad of soldiers was summoned and was ordered to rush in upon the lad and stab him. Soon after this crime Caligula, now beginning to enjoy the taste of slaughter, compelled the father of his wife Junia Claudilla, an excellent old noble, to commit suicide by cutting his throat.

The pretext for the murder of Tiberius was this—that the lad on approaching his brother had smelled of an antidote to poisons—an antidote which Caligula suggested had been taken to guard against possible poisoning by himself. The excuse for the killing of the father-in-law was that he had refused to accompany the Emperor on a certain voyage so that he might remain in Rome and seize the city. As a matter of fact, the supposed antidote was a harmless cough-mixture—whilst Silanus had refused to travel because he suffered from sea-sickness. But when a dog was to be beaten, any stick was sufficient for the purpose of the Emperor.

The immoral crimes of Caligula were appalling. Weak-kneed critics when speaking of these times urge the excuse that the morals of a man must not be judged by later standards. But good men have lived in all ages; and the eternal verities of which Carlyle speaks are independent of environment and period. Only a hundred years separated the monstrous Caligula from the saint Aurelius.

Satiated with conventional vices, he turned his eyes towards his young sister Drusilla. Gaining her surrender by a specious trick, he committed an incestuous act with the girl. After she had married and was living contentedly with her husband, he forced the man to give up his young wife. For many weeks the horrible intercourse was renewed. Unfortunately, Suetonius, although garrulously anecdotal and devoted to detail, does not tell us how the husband received and endured

this outrage. That is the essential weakness of this historian—he concentrates too much on his chief protagonist and leaves the others in a shadow. . . .

Drusilla, fortunately perhaps for herself, died. Caligula then showed almost hysterical grief and remorse. He ordered that she should be deified—public mourning was commanded. The Courts were closed—legal business was suspended. He issued a proclamation forbidding feasting and bathing. Any person who was observed to enter the baths was liable to immediate execution. More than that, if a man laughed in the street, or any public place, he, too, was liable to heavy punishment.

Of the many wives whom Caligula married, he preferred perhaps the handsome and lascivious Cæsonia, who delighted him by her voluptuous tricks. Once she expressed a desire to exhibit herself naked to the soldiery of the palace. Caligula, much amused, yielded to the whim and the exhibition took place, scandalizing the honest fellows, who derived no pleasure from an act which seemed to them humiliating and base.

When Caligula was in a mood wherein ferocity gave place to playful maliciousness, he did many strange things. He prided himself, it is said, on a gift of humorous inventiveness, and his inventions were directed to the humiliation of helpless senators and courtiers.

Sometimes, when this mood took hold of him, he would cause a number of stout and short-winded senators, clad in long gowns over which they stumbled, to run for many miles beside his chariot. He would

whip up the horses, and laugh with boyish delight when the fainting wretches collapsed on the road. One can imagine him hurling feeble jokes at the runners, perhaps bidding them enter for the Marathon races. At other times, he would call upon several of the most revered senators to wait upon him at table, addressing them as he addressed his slaves, abusing them if they showed themselves clumsy servitors.

It will be abundantly clear from these incidents that the emotion of pity—the emotion which is invariably absent from the criminal of all ages and all places—was unknown to this man. Whether he was ordering and superintending a wholesale slaughter, or merely amusing himself with the tricks which we have described, he was utterly bare of pity.

Vanity, the dominating emotion of the criminal, was his obsession. He murdered many men and women secretly because they had in some way, unconsciously perhaps, wounded his self-esteem. Sometimes, to disguise the fact that he had been responsible for the crimes, he would call for the victims, feigning great astonishment when informed that they were dead. . . . ‘But I was speaking to him only yesterday,’ the Imperial hypocrite would say. “Surely, there has been a blunder. Go and seek him again!”

He loved the theatre and the circus, but even when he was amusing himself in those places, he could not refrain from the joy of inflicting pain on other people. He went to strange lengths to achieve this end. For instance, whilst sitting in a theatre, he would send his

agents among the people to stir up quarrels and hates. *The agents would subtly and ingeniously bring about class-factions, egging on the occupants of the expensive seats to sneer at the proletariat in the cheaper seats.* When the quarrelling was at its hottest issue, Caligula would look on with satisfaction. Sometimes, during the hottest days of summer, he would order the curtains which surrounded the theatre should be tightly drawn and all air excluded. From the cool heights of his own seat, he would look upon the sweltering fainting mob with delight.

He came at last to the point when he hated every man and woman—and most of all himself. When a creature who is obsessed by self-love develops self-hatred, then brain chaos is near. Then one may look for horrors. Caligula at this point was half-insane.

Nevertheless, he retained sufficient sanity to make him a good economist. He taxed his people brutally but would allow no wastage in his palaces. When cattle for the feeding of the wild beasts in the arenas became very dear, he solved the problem of the feeding by offering to the beasts the bodies of condemned criminals!

When he had a violent grudge against any person, he would immediately order his arrest. The wretched victim was then imprisoned in a large cage in the Palace where the lowness of the roof caused the prisoner to have no means of movement except by crawling on all-fours. The Emperor would sometimes stand by the cage, prodding the occupant with sharp knives.

He said that the ordinary means of execution by *beheading, strangling, or crucifying*, were too simple and that he would have more ingenious methods. To this end, he saw to it that men and women were torn asunder by horses, dismembered; slowly killed by a thousand wounds.

Realizing, moreover, that moral torments might be as keen as, if not keener than, bodily sufferings, he would frequently cause parents to look upon the executions of their children. Once, when a father sent word that he was sick and could not come, Caligula with hideous courtesy placed at his disposal a litter and slaves. The miserable man was carried to the place, and the execution was done under his eyes!

This monster, in his more amiable moments, encouraged the society of poets and artists, but woe betide any writer who by word or gesture came near to offending the Imperial vanity. There was a certain poet who quite innocently introduced into his verse a line that might have been twisted by ingenious brains into "double entendre," reflecting on Caligula. The poet, of course, swore that he was innocent—that he would have died many times rather than write a word that could show disrespect to majesty—but Caligula dismissed the plea with a grin and ordered the poet to be roasted at a slow fire. "Make a verse on That!" he probably flung at the wretched scribe. Another person who had offended him was given to the beasts of the arena. When the bound victim cried suddenly "Cæsar, I am innocent," the Emperor had him brought out.

His tongue was then extracted and he was sent back to the lions. The mere protestation of innocence was looked upon as a piece of insolent effrontery.

He was cunning, very cunning and subtle. There were occasions when he did not wish to put to death certain persons without a good pretext. He would then commission his spies and panders to invent stories of sedition concerning the destined victims. They were arrested and condemned !

He loved to speak of himself, and for hours would discourse upon his character and his tendencies. In those expansive and comparatively harmless moments, he would encourage his "entourage" to "interview" him, and would answer their questions with satisfaction. Once, when asked upon which of his characteristics he most greatly prided himself, Caligula replied immediately that his rigour and harshness seemed to him the most admirable things in his character.

He issued a command that no felon was to be dispatched swiftly. "Strike that he may know and feel in every fibre of his body that he is dying," was the order of this monster. When innocent men had been punished for acts of which they were afterwards proved to have been guiltless, he would laugh and say that they had probably deserved their fate for other crimes which had escaped scrutiny, exactly as in a later time Dr. Keate, the flogging Headmaster of Eton, would apologize to boys whom he had whipped by mistake. "You probably have often deserved whippings which you did not get," he would tell the shivering wretches,

and indeed between the sadisms of a Caligula and the sadisms of certain old-fashioned schoolmasters, there is only the gap of time and circumstance. Cruelty is a very democratic vice.

Frequently he was bored beyond endurance. He would yawn and say that he was to be pitied for being compelled to live in very dull and uneventful times. Nothing, he said, had happened during his reign to amuse or excite. In the days of Augustus, there had been the fall of Varus—in the reign of his predecessor Tiberius, great scaffoldings in Rome had fallen and hundreds of citizens had been killed. There had not even been a good pestilence to arouse an interest in life.

On occasions, he designed houses and bridges, and showed remarkable cleverness. A large bridge at Putcoli was built from his drawings. Not content, however, with this constructive achievement, he must needs gratify his love of destruction by adding to the bridge a collapsible platform. During the ceremony of opening the viaduct, the platform was manipulated by levers that caused it to sink. Hundreds of spectators were flung into the sea, and many were drowned.

He enjoyed the performance of things that seemed to defy Nature. When a Temple was to be built, he would choose a foundation of piles in some place where the sea raged most furiously. He razed hills and filled up valleys, speeding up the artificers and workmen with threats and stripes.

He committed many sacrileges in the temples, throwing

out or defacing the most cherished images of gods. Posing as a critic of Literature, he gave orders that the statues of Virgil and Livy that had been erected in the streets, should be removed, on the grounds that the poet had small learning and little wit and that the historian was careless and verbose !

He robbed nobles and populace alike. He took large sums from snobs anxious to sit at the royal table. The courtezans of the streets and houses of ill-fame were taxed, a sum being exacted for each " client." Moreover, he imposed a heavy tax on men and women who lived together without benefit of clergy. With glorious inconsistency, he set up a huge brothel in the palace itself. Touts were sent out into the streets and into the surrounding villages to secure roués, young and old, who paid tribute not only to the women of the " bordel " but to the Emperor in addition.

To such depths had this man sunk that sometimes he would play the part of a beggar. He sent forth an edict that on the 1st of January he would receive New Year's gifts in person. Standing in the porch of the Palatine palace, he held out his hands for gold and silver from the people. At a later time, he developed the miser's love of gold for its own sake. He would strip himself naked and would wallow joyously among masses of the metal.

The physical courage which is sometimes a bright thing in the colour scheme of an evil autocrat was not conspicuous in Caligula. He had no love of battle.

It is true that he took part in a half-hearted expedition in Germany, but in that country he achieved merely spectacular things. On his return to Rome, he indulged in a great triumph, but there was little to justify the exhibition.

In the last year of his brief life, Caligula's obsession of grandeur touched insane depths. He insisted that divine honours should be paid to him throughout the Empire. It is true that his predecessors Augustus and Tiberius had to some extent encouraged this practice, but they had not exhibited the mad enthusiasm of Caligula.

Of all the subject peoples, the Jews alone refused to obey this edict. Caligula, enraged by their refusal, immediately commanded that a large statue of himself should be placed in their Holy of Holies at Jerusalem. The Hebrews were, of course, horrified. They sent envoys begging that the image might be removed. Caligula, happening on that day to be in an amiable mood, received them with contempt rather than rage. "Why don't you people eat pork?" he flung at them. Then he said with a laugh that those persons who did not recognize and acknowledge his divinity were perhaps more to be pitied than blamed.

There is no doubt that this outrage in the Temple would have brought about a serious rebellion of the Jews had not the death of Caligula averted the rebellion. Ready in all ages to submit patiently to social persecution, the Hebrews, to their everlasting renown, have invariably resisted to the death interference with their religious ideals. The predecessors of Caligula had wisely

respected this devotion, and so far from interfering with Jewish rites and observances, had actually subsidized their temples !

The end of this reign of horror was now approaching. There had been several small conspiracies during the four years of Caligula's regime, but they had come to nothing, and this failure was probably due to the fact that the country was thick with spies, and the nobles who engineered the schemes distrusted each other. And, in the last event, Caligula was destroyed not by a political conspiracy, but by men smarting from private injuries.

The chief protagonist was Cassius Charæa, a tribune of one of the Praetorian regiments of the palace. He was an effeminate person whom the Emperor had often petted and fondled, but at a later time, Caligula turned upon this favourite, insulting him with foul words and fouler gestures. Charæa, maddened by these insults, and fearing that at any moment he might suffer the fate of another favourite (Apelles, the actor, whom Caligula had ordered to be strangled), set to work to bring about the tyrant's death.

He found many who were ready to help him. No man was safe. The very guards whose duty charged them to protect the Emperor, now turned against their master. Why had they not revolted sooner ? A hard question this to answer—a question that is asked whenever a tyranny with foul cruelties has persisted for a long time. Why ? Perhaps because with the general hopefulness of mankind, the sufferers under the rule of

a tyrant believe that chance or the desperate action of others more daring than themselves, may at any moment break down the domination. Or, perhaps, during these reigns there is a fear obsessing the people, like to the fear of a pestilence, where no man will venture from his house to succour another man because he dreads infection. In the case of Caligula, moreover, sops were flung to the mass of people. There were games and gifts of food. A well-fed amused populace is not easily aroused.

And thus was the conspiracy begun. It hung fire after its inception, and although the conspirators had resolved that the Emperor should die immediately, nothing was done until the morning of January 24th, A.D. 41. Three days had passed, each of which had given them an opportunity. The Palatine Games were being held in the theatre that adjoined the palace, and Caligula might easily have been despatched as he entered or quitted the theatre. But the men hesitated and held back.

The dawn of the fourth and last day of the Games rose upon a Cæsar tired, disgruntled, unwilling to rise from his bed. He would go on sleeping, he said, little dreaming that a prolonged sleep was drawing near to him. However, his attendants, realizing that if the killing was not done on this day, it might be indefinitely put off and perhaps abandoned, prevailed upon him to rise and dress. Grumbling and complaining, he at length yielded to their wishes, and after he had eaten a perfunctory meal (for he was sick and had lost his appetite),

Caligula went slowly through the vaulted passage that led from the palace to the theatre.

Whilst in this passage, he was approached by an official who begged that he would inspect a party of noble youths from Asia who had come to perform in the theatre. The Emperor, always interested in mimes and singers, spoke to them kindly, suggesting that they should return with him for a few minutes to a room in the palace where they could rehearse for his private entertainment certain songs and dances. Seeing him thus engrossed, Charæa and another tribune came up behind the Emperor with drawn swords. One of them stabbed him in the throat—the other cleft his jaw. He fell immediately, clawing the air, and crying “I live ! I live !” The mass of the conspirators then attacked him, and he died a few minutes afterwards with thirty wounds. His face was twisted by pain into a horrible shape. A fight then followed between the assassins and the bodyguard, and several men were killed on each side.

The body was left where it had fallen. Later that afternoon, it was seized and placed upon a rough litter, and then buried in the Imperial pleasure grounds, a shallow grave having been dug. There were no rites of any kind. Many months afterwards, when the sisters of the dead Emperor were recalled from exile, they exhumed the remains and buried them with the usual solemnities.

In person, Gaius Caligula was tall, of wan colour, with a gross, badly made neck and legs. His pale eyes were

deeply sunken. His temples were hollow. His hair was very thin, and he was nearly bald. His hands and body were hairy—indeed such was his hairiness that Suetonius records that none dared mention a goat in his presence. He had a face of great grimness, and would sometimes pose before the mirror, endeavouring to twist his features into expressions that would terrify his cringing people.

In the last years of his life, he developed insane delusions. He believed sometimes when he was on the seashore that the ocean was speaking to him. A blasphemer of the gods, he was nevertheless grossly superstitious and fearful of the terrors of Nature. During a thunderstorm, he would cover his face with the bedclothes like a child in the nursery. Savage to the point of maniacal fury on most occasions, on other occasions he was merely petulant and absurd. (Once in the theatre during a recitation by the actor Apelles, he soundly boxed the ears of a man who chanced to sneeze.) He was violently inconsistent and a law unto himself. When charged with inconsistency he said, "So be it! I am Cæsar! If I choose, I can say one thing to-day and another thing to-morrow." Certain of our modern statesmen follow a similar course without the frank admission of Caligula.

Several of his savage remarks have come down to us and have become known to persons whose acquaintance with Roman history is in all other directions very limited. The "man in the street" will remember his outburst concerning the people of Rome. "I would that they had one neck so that I might sever it." The

anecdote of Caligula at the dinner-table is also known to many who are entirely innocent of classic reminiscences. The anecdote relates how, once at a dinner-party, he burst out laughing. When asked why he laughed, he replied: "I was thinking how one word from me would send all your heads rolling on that floor, cut off from your bodies!" This pleasantry, in slightly varied form, was sometimes addressed to a mistress. Fondling the girl's neck, he would say, "One nod from me, and this pretty throat would be instantly cut!" One imagines that Caligula, as a lover, might have appealed to the readers of Miss Ethel M. Dell's romances. He was the cave-man *in excelsis*, or rather *in profundis*.

The verdict of history has gone against Caligula—it has been held that he was a monster of a peculiarly horrible sort, but that there was some extenuation of his deeds, we may feel tolerably certain.

His heredity was against the man—he inherited insane instincts and tendencies. Moreover, a tendency towards Oriental despotism was perhaps developed in him as a boy, when he was brought up among a number of Eastern youths who had been conveyed to Rome in order that they might learn Roman methods and thus aid in Romanizing the Eastern dependencies and provinces. From these lads he learned many strange devices—obscene cruelties.

There was a certain strength in his character that moves admiration. The effeminacy and the self-indulgence of Nero formed no part of his nature. Throughout

his very brief reign, his activities were invariably well maintained. He conceived and carried into execution many admirable schemes for the improvement of domestic and Imperial affairs. Not for an hour did Caligula relax the reins of government, which he held always with firm hand, and he was perhaps a better patriot than he himself knew. Moreover, we know that he never allowed himself to surrender to favourites—opportunists and schemers were sternly repressed.

He caused himself (as we know) to be worshipped as a deity, and there is little doubt that in the fullness of time he came to believe in his own god-ship. When we consider the frail humanity of pagan deities, it is perhaps not surprising that men should after a long course of flattery and aggrandizement come to regard themselves as akin to the Olympians. Caligula, obsessed by the belief that he held divine powers, came to the point when he told himself that he could do no wrong. Evil itself became good if wrought by his hand.

“ Quos Deus vult perdere prius dementat ! ” Caligula inherited insanity, and his life was a prolonged battle to subdue that disease. Long before death came, he was weary of existence ; and in taking this last survey of this monster of the first century, let us extend to him the pity which would have pleased him. For true to criminal type, he pitied himself, but could find no room in his heart for the pity of mankind.

THOMAS DUN

AN OUTLAW THIEF AND MURDERER OF PLANTAGENET
TIMES, WHO GAVE HIS NAME TO A TOWN, AND WAS
EVENTUALLY EXECUTED PIECEMEAL

THE pleasant, if dull little town of Dunstable, in the South of England, has the distinction (if the chronicler of the *Newgate Calendar* may be believed), of deriving its name from a man who was one of the most diabolical scoundrels that ever infested town or country. The career of Thomas Dun, though savage enough, would perhaps not find a place in the records of crime but for that fact, and a certain insane courage that railed him off from the less intrepid criminals of his period. That courage was remarkable—of the kind that would cause a modern judge to say to Dun if he stood in the dock, “A man like you ought to have been in the Army!” An unkind reflection on the needs of armies, this, but the philosopher who hates war will see in it an irony that illumines the false fabric upon which all warfare is based.

Dun was born in a village near the Elstow of John Bunyan. His parents were respectable folk, but Thomas was a thief from the beginning. A local gossip said of the child that he was so given to stealing that everything stuck to his hands “like birdlime.” Students of heredity would find Dun a hard puzzle. Here was a boy whose ancestral record was good—a long line of honest peasantry. No unusual circumstance caused him to steal. Why did he do it? One may fall back upon the unsatisfactory theory of atavism; one may quote

Lombroso's pet phrase "Moral imbecility." But one imagines that neither theory explains the problem.

Long before he was a man, Dun had discovered and exploited a remarkable gift. He had the power of distorting his face into many shapes—it was of that india-rubber texture that he could do what he chose with brow, cheeks, and mouth. His eyes, moreover, could be sunk or projected.

In the beginning, Dun used this gift for the purpose of practical jokes. Later, he found it very useful when he went out to steal and commit other outrages. He could manipulate his body as well as his face. Sometimes, he appeared as a one-armed or one-legged person—sometimes as a hunchback—sometimes as a dwarf, for, by means of certain tricks known to actors, he could give the impression of very small stature. Aided by these Protean tricks, he was able for a long time to evade detection.

The first deliberate murder was committed on the road to Bedford. Dun, hiding behind a hedge, saw a large wagon, filled with corn, drawn by several well-nourished handsome horses. Instantly he scented a good prize and made his plans. He crawled into the wagon, crept up behind the wagoner, and coolly stabbed him to death. This done, he stopped the horses, tore down the body, and having stripped the corpse of its clothing, assumed the clothing himself. His next action was to dig a shallow grave for the dead wagoner and fling him into the trench, hastily covering him with turf and brambles. Later, he drove the wagon into

Bedford, disposed of the load of corn at a good price, and finally sold the van and the horses. Then he went home, careful not to drink on the way, and indeed, throughout his career Dun was careful to avoid drink and the ordinary vices of the criminal. To these abstinences, perhaps, he owed his long safety.

Dun hated loneliness. It was that hatred that presently urged him to raise a company of thieves to go with him on his expeditions. As we know, a lack of courage was not one of his failings—but he was afraid of his own society. The gang soon discovered a remote underground hiding place, and here they sojourned, enjoying themselves, eating, drinking, fighting, and reminiscing concerning their exploits.

“They committed” (says the chronicler) “a thousand villainies.” The road between Towcester and St. Albans was their chief hunting-ground. After a time, so great was the fear set up by the gang that the King (Henry the First), proclaimed Dun an outlaw, and ordered that a small town should be built on that road, so that the distance between Towcester and St. Albans might be protected to some extent by an intervening assembly of people. And so it came about that the town of Dunstable was raised, and Dun was its name-giver.

Dun’s thieves and cut-throats specialized. Each man had his “trade.” One devoted himself to making false keys, another to making tools for breaking into houses, a third cultivated a talent for the filing of iron bars. Their occupations, however, did not fill all their time, and they frequently fell out and came near to killing

each other. Dun, recognizing that some kind of order must be set up, actually instituted a sort of legislature among his ruffians. He imposed rules and regulations—and heavily fined any cut-throat who tried to practise in private life his profession of the road. Dun exacted obedience, firstly, by his reputation for daring, and secondly, by his power of striking terror into his people through the assumption of horrible faces. It is possible that with the simplicity of the time, they credited him with demoniacal powers.

They were lawless times, as we are aware, but not so lawless but that authority tried to catch and hang, mutilate or roast, criminals who disturbed the peace. For a period, indeed, the fear inspired by Dun had rendered him free from pursuit; but presently there arose a strong man in the county of Bedfordshire—the Sheriff of Bedford. He vowed that he had no fear of Dun—that whether he were or were not aided by the devil—he would arrest the fellow, and hang him on the highest tree in the county.

A grand attack was organized. The Sheriff's men in their liveries of office penetrated the woods, and presently came upon the gang, taking them, as they imagined, by surprise. But Dun, by means of spies and scouts, had been warned of the expedition. A man of genius in his own department, he was rarely unprepared for the unexpected. The two forces engaged battle, and the Sheriff's force was defeated. Soon it was in full flight, but not before Dun's men had contrived to take

eleven prisoners. These men were promptly hanged. After the hangings, Dun ordered his people to strip the bodies of the liveries, so that a design which he had in mind might be carried out.

Dun himself put on a livery. Accompanied by six of his rogues, also liveried, he went at night to a certain castle in the district, where great treasure was said to be hidden in a huge chest. Then he played a trick that story writers have reproduced a hundred times. Posing as officers of the law, Dun with great dignity informed the seneschal that he had reason to suspect that certain of "that infamous outlaw's men—I mean Thomas Dun—are hidden in the castle for the purpose of robbery." The seneschal, very terrified, begged the supposed officers to search the building. Dun made a great pretence of doing this. Meantime, the seneschal, very frightened, locked himself in his room. Presently Dun returned, and having prevailed on the old man to open the door, told him that he had reason to believe that the robbers had hidden themselves in the treasure-chest. The seneschal, suspecting nothing—overwhelmed, perhaps, by the livery of office that Dun and his thieves were wearing—at once delivered up the key. Dun coolly went back, helped himself to the treasure, and then quitted the castle with his men, having gained a large booty without striking a single blow!

Dun was very pleased with the success of this business. Still more satisfied was the scoundrel with what followed, for the horrible episode deserved to "score off" the Sheriff whom he hated. The episode was the hanging

of four or five of the real officers. They were immediately denounced by the owner of the castle, and being dumb-founded by the sudden and inexplicable charge, could not defend themselves with any conviction. The hanging followed within a few days! The Sheriff was, of course, horrified, and swore immediate vengeance on Dun.

But it was easier to take an oath of the kind than to catch the man. At all times and at all points, he eluded capture. The sheriff's men would go to take him at a certain junction of roads, but on arrival would find nothing but a caricature of their leader, pinned to a tree, with jeering and obscene insults, written by a member of the gang who had acquired the art of writing.

Dun had now become so great a terror of certain roads that those roads were practically abandoned by travellers, many of whom preferred to lose valuable business to having their throats cut and their goods stolen. For some time he went on robbing and murdering, but at length he began to realize that the South was not yielding him sufficient harvest. He was too well known. He must change his "locale."

To the North he now went with his men. The gang of thieves and cut-throats, each specializing in some form of villainy, had now reached the formidable number of fifty. Dun's savagery was increasing with the passage of years. He spared neither man, woman, nor child. He would slit a throat as he would hum a tune—doing both very skilfully and with great good humour.

The chronicler gives us no clue to the attitude of Dun towards life and humanity, but we may perhaps deduce from certain crude characteristics that here was the profound cynic, who had lost all faith in men and women—who held that the world would be better dead. A Schopenhauer confines his destructive philosophy to the written word—men of the Thomas Dun order translate their views into murder. Dun was of that most hopeless breed—the born cynic breed—for from childhood he had despised and jeered at all people.

It must have been a cheerless sort of life that he led upon those dark roads—with very little to interest him, for he was no wine-bibber—no glutton. The arts were not for him, and of course he could not read or write. The future held nothing for him—he saw perhaps only the gallows and then a nothingness. But he continued his course, urged perhaps by some instinctive hatred of humanity that served its purpose as a spur and an encouragement.

In the course of time, Thomas Dun became a sort of enveloping horror on the roads of Yorkshire. Like a pestilence—like an evil phantom—like a recurring ghastly dream! Weak-minded persons fell into mad delusions, actually believing that they had encountered the robber-murderer who had engraved upon their bodies some mark by which in the future he would recognize them and take their lives. Children seeing a harmless unknown man on the road after nightfall, would run screaming to their homes. Crimes of which he was doubtless innocent were set down at his door.

The countryside was obsessed—and when men and women spoke of the Devil, they thought of him in the shape of Dun.

At length, when he had robbed and murdered for many years, concerted action was tried. Half-hearted attempts to seize the robber had, of course, been made time after time, but no strongly organized force had been assembled. Eventually, the Sheriff of York organized a considerable party for the purpose of attacking Dun. The party was augmented by many citizens and villagers.

Dun, by reason of the great terror he had inspired, had actually been living in a small house on the outskirts of a wood not far from York. To our modern eyes, the sight of a criminal coolly reposing at home, untouched by the Law, seems impossible and absurd, but in order to gain the right focus on this condition of affairs, we must remember that England at the time was a country possessed by foreign invaders who were frequently engaged in repelling the attacks of native Saxons. Now picture Dun as a Norman baron, in his castle, enjoying a certain immunity from injury by reason of the fear that he inspired. Then we have the situation. Dun in his little house was lord of his castle, because he had contrived to create an atmosphere of overwhelming terror.

But the end was near. Dun, finding his stronghold besieged, showed his usual courage. He forced his way through the great mass, mounted on his horse, and striking at the people with his long dagger. His gang

had deserted him, and he had to rely on his own hands and weapons.

He showed no fear, but smilingly stuck the throats of the attackers, leaning down from his horse to give the thrusts. Presently, the crowd forced him from the animal, but he had hardly touched the ground when with a swift movement, he contrived to remount. Drawing his sword, he cut his way through the mass of one hundred and fifty people, who, armed with clubs, bludgeons, pitchforks, and other improvised weapons, sought to hold him back. Putting spurs to his horse, he quitted the road, and galloping through a cornfield, presently outdistanced the pursuers.

Dun was so indifferent to danger that he actually dismounted after a time and lay down to rest by a hedge. (Perhaps he was a Determinist—this crude cynic of the highway, and believed that until his hour had arrived, no harm could touch him.) He was on the point of dozing when the attacking party, now swelled to several hundreds of people, discovered his presence. How he contrived to get away, thus surrounded, one cannot explain. But by some miraculous happening, he succeeded in doing this, and then ran with tremendous speed towards the river. Thrusting his dagger in his teeth, he leaped into the stream, and swam to a small island. Seeing that he was about to land, boats were launched, and a dozen men rowed towards the patch of land on which Dun now stood, ready to encounter them. Before they could ground their boats, he was thrusting at them with his dagger. His remarkable strength and

agility enabled him to prevent them landing. Other boats were then pushed off, but before they could touch the island, Dun was once again in the river, swimming towards a spot which he fancied would be sufficiently lonely to afford him a chance of escape. But for once his reckoning was wrong. A large number of the attacking party, foreseeing that he might make for that spot, had hidden themselves behind the trees. He landed, and was taken by surprise. Before he could strike a blow, the robber had been knocked over the head with oars, and stunned.

They bound him with ropes, which were soon exchanged for the strongest chains in York. Dun was then taken before a magistrate, and after a brief examination, was sent under a powerful guard to Bedford, it being held by the authorities that he should be dealt with in the district where he had committed his first crimes.

And so, back to Bedford went Dun, knowing that he was going there to die, but nevertheless continuing to maintain a stoical attitude, and amusing his captors by coarse cynicisms.

There was no formal trial of Dun. He was an outlaw, had been a proclaimed outlaw for years, and the rights of citizenship did not exist for him.

The sole question that agitated the authorities was the question of making his death as horrible as possible, so that he might serve as a deterrent to other potential criminals.

Eventually, they decided that justice would be satisfied and a spectacular purpose served by a piecemeal execution. And so it came about that two weeks after his arrest, Dun was solemnly taken to the Market Place at Bedford, where a huge crowd had assembled to see him die.

Unmoved, but very aggressive, Dun, having mounted the platform, told the two executioners that if they dared to lay a hand on him, he would kill them both. On their ignoring his words and seeking to bind him, he caught their heads, knocked them together, and would have brained the fellows had not others intervened and overpowered him.

That was the last struggle of Dun. The horrible sentence was then deliberately carried out. First of all the executioners, with jagged knives, cut off the arms below the elbows, and afterwards, the upper arms of the writhing wretch. Slowly and with cruel carefulness, the torturers cut away his feet below the ankles, and the legs were sawn off at the knees. The thighs were excised five inches from the trunk. Finally, the head was severed, and what remained of the body burned to ashes. The dismembered limbs and head were taken away, and hung on posts in various parts of the county of Bedfordshire.

Dun, in all probability, was not more than thirty-five or forty when he came to his terrible end at Bedford. It is conceivable that he packed into each year of his life on the highways more crimes than the average

modern criminal packs into a lifetime! In Yorkshire and in Bedford, for years after his passage, he was a legend and a "bogey" used by nurses to terrify their charges into obedience. His ghost was said to haunt certain roads which he had terrorized during life, and more than one superstitious traveller who had escaped the attentions of Dun whilst the latter was alive, came home with hair-raising stories of an encounter with the phantom, the apparition perhaps being an ingenious thief who had borrowed the guise of Dun in order to prey more successfully on fools and cowards.

GILLE DE RAIS

A SORCERER-MURDERER OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.
THE CENTRAL FIGURE OF THE MOST CELEBRATED
TRIAL OF THE MIDDLE AGES FOR DEALINGS IN
BLACK MAGIC.

THE alleged practice of sorcery in the early and late Middle Ages was so frequent that the case of Gille de Rais would perhaps not have entered into history but for two outstanding facts. The first fact is that the case of this man was distinguished by certain horrible episodes that must place Gille in the category of those monsters who have loved cruelty, mutilation, and murder beyond all things. The second fact is that his trial constitutes the most notable trial for sorcery recorded during the period in question.

Students of abnormal psychology are aware that there frequently comes a time in the career of the satiated slave of pleasures when normal delights will no longer gratify nor stir him. A response can be achieved only when those pleasures are preceded or followed by stripes, wounds, and the shedding of blood. This is a morbid subject. One would not linger on it long. Let us come to the facts.

Gille de Rais, born in 1404 in Brittany of a noble family, heir to the Barony of Rais and automatically entitled to the headship of the Baronage of Brittany, began to practise many kinds of vice whilst he was yet a boy. His father died whilst Gille was very young. Left to the charge of an indulgent, weak-minded grand-

father, he found his friends and his companions among servants, grooms, and pimps. From them he speedily learned precocious tricks.

Long before he was twenty, he had married the heiress Catharine de Thouars, who brought him a very large fortune. The death of his father put him in possession of a number of valuable estates.

In spite of boyish vices, he began his career well enough. He joined the Army. At the age of sixteen he was fighting and bearing himself bravely in the campaign that eventually terminated the ancient feud between the two great houses of De Montfort and Penthievre. His courage was tremendous, and a certain magnetic quality gave him leadership over men. It was said of Gille that he could take his soldiers into perils from which they would have flinched had they been led by another man. Moreover, he displayed great strategic talents.

He loved soldiering in those early days, did this man who not many years later was practising the softest and most debasing of vices. He welcomed hard living. There was nothing in his actions nor in his words to herald what was to come. Of all enigmas of character, the enigma of Gille de Rais must remain the most inscrutable.

Presently, he attached himself to the army of Charles VII. Here he won great distinction in his resistance to the English. Indeed, so admirably did Gille comport himself that we find him a Field-Marshal of France at the age of twenty-five!

The hard fighter is rarely a man devoted to the arts. Here we have another paradox of character, for Gille de Rais would come home from a hard-fought campaign to enjoy the solace of pictures, books, and music. His library was one of the most extensive in France. He surrounded himself with sculpture, with richly illumined missals, with exquisitely wrought carvings. Himself an excellent musician, he welcomed minstrels from many places. Music sometimes so played upon his senses that he would weep and develop a kind of emotional hysteria. He encouraged actors at a time when actors were despised—and his castles were frequently converted into theatres.

One would have said of Gille de Rais at that time that here was the ideal *grand seigneur* of his period—gallant, wise, tolerant, cultured—a lover of the beautiful things of life; the kind of man who would enjoy a long, full life and die at last in the odour of sanctity and safety.

But in his brain, or soul, or spirit—call it what you will—or perhaps travelling to him from some unclassified region outside himself—there was a diabolical elemental force. That force suddenly took hold of him when he had reached the age of twenty-eight.

Think of the transformation! Picture Gille at that time abruptly leaving the army and the fields where he had won so many hardly contested triumphs in order to surrender himself to the soft life of the man who lives only for the gratification of his senses.

He began now to spend money with such mad

extravagance that presently more than one of his castles was mortgaged. He enjoyed a semi-Royal state. A troop of more than two hundred horsemen accompanied him on all his journeys. When he gave dramatic performances, the stages were filled with huge crowds of players, brought from all parts of the country. He dressed himself more magnificently than the King. He would squander a sum equivalent to several thousands of pounds in our currency on a single banquet. A lover of classic times, he desired to imitate the insensate extravagance and wastefulness of the Cæsars !

Swiftly his character weakened. The brain that had planned many war-like expeditions with skill and patience, now hated to trouble itself with the simplest problem of his household. He left the management of his rich estates and salt-mines to subordinates, who, of course, robbed him with the whole-hearted energies of unrestrained servitors. In order to raise money to pay his ever-growing debts, he continued to mortgage his lands. Indeed, he pursued this course with such persistence that at length his relatives petitioned the King to issue an edict restraining persons from dealing with Gille in connection with these properties.

All this was commonplace enough. One would not be writing of Gille de Rais after the passage of five hundred years had he merely been a brave fighter, who abandoned the Army and became an extravagant liver. Our interest in him must now be concentrated on the secret side of his life—the side hidden from

the gay companies who came to his dinners and who sat with him and watched his mummers and his minstrels.

It was at this time that children of ages that varied from three to sixteen began to vanish from the neighbourhoods wherein the castles of Gille were situated. In those stormy times, the disappearance of a child did not arouse the curiosity and suspense that would be aroused in our own day. Indeed, it is only in comparatively recent years that child life has held the sanctity that it enjoys. It is difficult for us with our almost exaggerated worship of children to realize the attitude of former generations. Children, to a large extent, were regarded as stubborn foolish things, to be repressed, beaten, and at best tolerated. Whilst, of course, individual parental affection was probably no less than it is to-day, the general attitude of society towards these young ones was an attitude of indifference or of positive dislike.

In the case of those children who vanished to fall into the hands of Gille de Rais, there was an additional motive for the lack of curiosity. They were in most cases the offspring of tramps, vagrants, gypsies, and others of the wandering and uncherished class. Thus did it come about that Gille himself or his agents were able to entrap numbers of boys and girls without arousing undue terror or anxiety.

It was the custom of Gille when the sudden desire took hold of him to go down to the room where the entrapped child was chained, and to set free the boy or



GILLE DE LAVAL SEIGNEUR DE RAIS

girl with kind words and encouraging smiles. Having thus won the confidence of the child, he would begin to fondle it, bestowing upon it the kisses which the innocent little creature returned. He would then feed the child with sweetmeats, watching with voluptuous eyes the pleasure in the eyes of the child, which in a few moments would be changed into agony.

When the preliminary farce had been played long enough, he would suddenly assume a voice of great sternness. He would wrench the clothes from the terrified little creature, and mercilessly flog the naked flesh until blood came. Then, with the blood-stirring fumes of lust in his brain, he would fall upon the child and commit a nameless outrage.

But that was not the end. Having regaled himself for some time with the screams of pain, with the slow writhings of the victim, he would then with a sharp knife proceed to perform certain horrible and obscene mutilations. After that, the mood of the moment decided whether the victim was left to bleed to death or to be dispatched with a final stab.

At a later stage, it was calculated that perhaps no less than two hundred children had been thus murdered by Gille de Rais.

That the practice of sorcery certainly entered into some of these crimes we may feel tolerably certain. The blood of children, as we are aware, frequently formed an essential requirement of what is called black magic. But it is probable that the dominant motive of Gille

was a lustful cruelty; and torture and murder would have appealed to him strongly even if he had never turned his thoughts towards occult horrors.

Very soon he became the dupe of charlatans and wizards from various places. Attracted by his wealth, they came to him with their stories of the Philosopher's Stone, each one of them protesting that he alone possessed the long-sought magic that would change base metals into gold. Gille, now seized with a desire for infinite riches and for supreme power over mankind, greedily swallowed their lies. One by one, however, they were dismissed when their boastfully presented claims failed to achieve a result, but an Italian, Francesco Prelati, a loathsome scoundrel, contrived to retain his confidence. It is conceivable that this man did possess some kind of esoteric talent—it is possible that he practised hypnotism at a time when hypnotism did not bear that name and was regarded as a magic process. Very speedily he gained a strong hold upon the ingenuous Gille, who was ready to pay him huge sums in return for the alleged teaching of magic.

So vast was the credulity of Gille that he actually signed in blood a bargain with Prelati, swearing to be obedient to him in all things, great and small, in return for the three gifts of knowledge, wealth, and power. Moreover, to propitiate Satanic forces, he placed in the hands of Prelati a vessel that held the hand, the heart, and the eyes of one of his victims.

Prelati, in order to sustain his hold upon his dupe, performed a number of specious tricks, which a modern

music-hall illusionist would probably have carried out with better effects. Once, he produced a large impression upon Gille by introducing into the room a shower of gold pieces. When Gille attempted to touch the gold, it vanished, and a serpent took its place. Prelati also claimed that he could render himself invisible, but as the illusion was performed in darkness and was doubtless aided by hypnotic suggestion, we must not attach too much importance to the feat. However, it served its purpose. Gille was now positive that Prelati possessed supernatural powers of a very high order, and he regarded him as a valued representative of the devil.

For eight years, the entrapping of children—their outraging, mutilation, and murder went on undisturbed. Handsomely paid agents were sent by Gille into far-off districts to find new victims when the neighbourhood of his castles did not yield a sufficient harvest. When one of those castles was seized by the enemies who were at the time engaged in civil war in France, the bones of forty young children were found in an *oubliette* of the building.

Nevertheless, there is the possibility that this man have gone his way undisturbed and have died without paying the penalty of his crimes, but for the intervention of the Church. His alchemic activities had long been known, but these activities were not regarded by the Inquisition as distinctly illegal. However, there were several other possible indictments, and the Church hastened to avail itself of those charges.

There was another motive in addition to the motive of punishing a sorcerer. The Bishop of Nantes, Chancellor to the Duke Jean, had associated himself with his master in negotiating for the enormously rich estates of Gille de Rais. It suddenly was borne in upon their greedy consciousness, that if Gille were arraigned and condemned, those estates would automatically be confiscated and become the property of the Duke and his Chancellor. Urged on by this ambition, they set to work.

The usual delays and formalities, of course, presented themselves. The administration of justice in the Middle Ages was a cumbersome, contradictory sort of business. The most evil criminals sometimes escaped punishment whereas trivial offenders were brought to brutal deaths. Quibbles that in our own modern courts would not be entertained for two minutes, were solemnly argued, and frequently delayed the more serious issues for hours, days, or weeks! "Hair-splitting" was a favourite amusement of all Courts, but especially of the tribunals of the Inquisition.

It was necessary that the Duke Jean and his Chancellor should have some pretext for the arrest of Gille. This was speedily furnished by Gille himself. He was provoked into a quarrel that ended in a brawl in church. Here was the opportunity for the clerical authorities to assert themselves. He had led his troops of soldiers into a sacred house—he had committed the crime of sacrilege.

Having thus secured a good foundation for their charges the Duke and his ally then proceeded to build upon it

by further accusing Gille of sorcery and of prolonged and systematic child murder and outrage. The latter charge was regarded as trivial compared with the indictment of dealing with the devil.

The order was given for his immediate arrest, and two months afterwards, Gille was tried in the Civil Court on a charge of abduction. But this trial was, of course, merely a prelude to the more important proceedings that were to come. The Bishop desired to proceed cautiously—to play his cards without risk of losing the game. It was therefore held advisable to gain time by presenting first of all a trivial charge, and gathering evidence for the more serious indictment.

The charge of abduction failed. Perhaps witnesses were not available to swear that they had actually seen the Baron seize and carry off the children. There was a certain ingenuousness in judicial procedure of those times—circumstantial evidence did not hold the place it holds to-day. Gille, therefore, was acquitted on the abduction charges, but on the 13th September, 1440, to his great astonishment, he received a mandate signed by the Bishop of Nantes, commanding him to appear before his tribunal in six days' time. He was then to answer indictments of child-murder, heresy, and sorcery.

Panic now seized the many servants and agents who had aided him in his crimes. Two of them contrived to make good their flight, and were never caught. The remainder of the "entourage" were immediately arrested, chained, and taken under a very strong escort to Nantes.

The first hearing took place on the 19th September. Nothing of importance happened at that hearing. Several others followed, and in the meantime the patience of Gille was being exhausted. He had hoped and believed that he would be acquitted at the first trial, and when brought before the Bishop and the other members of the tribunal on the 13th October, he suddenly burst into a rage. "I do not acknowledge you as my judges," he declared fiercely. "And I vow that I would rather be executed this instant than be forced to undergo the humiliation of being judged by you!"

The Court listened patiently to his words, and then proceeded with the indictment. Gille passionately denied all the charges. That he had practised alchemy he admitted, but there was nothing in that practice which was held to be illegal. Did not the wisest and best men attempt to win gold from base metals? As for the alleged sorcery—the communion with the Evil One and his emissaries—and the murder of the children, he denied all these charges categorically and *in toto*. His enemies had invented these stories to ruin him, he declared. It was natural that a man of his wealth, genius, and power, should excite jealousy and hatred.

After a long and wearisome hearing in which many lies were probably told on both sides, the proceedings were adjourned for forty-eight hours in order that the prisoner might prepare his defence.

In the meantime, the Inquisition authorities had been busily engaged in connection with the secretaries,

servants, and agents of the Baron. Following the routine of the age, they had subjected every one of them, men and women alike, to several severe tortures in order to extract confessions.

Whilst on this subject, let us point out that an injustice has been done to Inquisitorial methods by the suggestion that the employment of torture was more extensive than was its employment by the civil authority. As a matter of fact the reverse is the truth. The Inquisition relied upon one or two forms of torture only—the State had many forms at its service. The chief torments of the Inquisition were the rack, the strappado, and the water-pouring. The rack was a series of pulleys operated in conjunction with a wooden frame, whereon the victim was stretched. By means of certain twistings, the body was subjected to torments compared with which the most horrible agonies of cramp would perhaps seem merely an amusement. The strappado was a simple process. The victim's hands were tied together behind him. He was then hauled up by the wrists to a hook in the wall and left hanging. Sometimes to enhance the experience the executioner would tug the feet. The water-torture, the most hideous of all, consisted of a preliminary vigorous binding of the arms, whereby the cords ate into the flesh. The body was then tilted, with the head downwards, and water was poured into the mouth until the lungs came near to bursting.

The agents and servants of Gille de Rais, having been subjected to one or more of these devices, presently offered full confessions, probably embellishing their bare

facts with ornamentations invented to appease their tormentors.

Now the confessions of these people were held to prove that the Baron had committed a number of child-murders, but thus far the sorcery charges had not been clearly demonstrated. The Baron, well aware of this fact, resolved to plead guilty to the former charge, but to deny resolutely the committal of what in those times would be regarded as the more heinous crimes. To kill a multitude of children was a small offence compared with the crime of devil-traffic.

And so, when he faced the tribunal after the adjournment of forty-eight hours, he announced that he was prepared to admit the killing of certain children, but in firm tones declared that he was innocent of sorcery and heresy.

Once again, this spun-out trial was adjourned. During the interval, the charlatan accomplice of the Baron, the notorious Francesco Prelati, had been subjected to the question by torture. He had then admitted his dealings with the Evil One and had given details of the co-operation of Gille.

All was now in readiness for the next episode. On the 20th October, the Baron was again brought before the tribunal. Again he denied his guilt. The evidence of his accomplice would have been sufficient to convict him, but the Inquisition authorities prided themselves on the moral satisfaction they secured from a personal confession. It was not sufficient that ten witnesses should make the guilt of a man as clear as the man's

own face and body—the man himself must speak the words that would send him to the fire. After a long deliberation, the Inquisitor announced that Gille would be subjected to torture if he refused to confirm the evidence of his associate.

The Baron seemed unmoved by the announcement and was taken back to his cell. Everybody believed that he would undergo the torments bravely, and perhaps refuse to speak, but they were entirely wrong in this presumption. For when the hour came and he was taken down to the room where the rack awaited him, this torturer of children suddenly collapsed and showed himself a very poor creature.

“For Jesu’s dear sake, give me a short respite?” he said. “Give me time to think of this matter, and perhaps you shall be satisfied.”

The Inquisition authorities were patient. They never hurried events. Moreover, they always showed a certain reasonableness in yielding to reasonable demands. On occasions, indeed, they were very gentle, came near to petting the about-to-be tortured wretches. The truth is, of course, that they did not care what methods they used—methods of kindness or of cruelty—providing they could secure the conviction of a man by his own lips. They would cajole, encourage, bribe, threaten, or torture, according to the expediency of the situation. There was a certain precision and mathematical exactness in their methods that raised torture from a mere artifice to the level of a debased science.

They gave him until two o’clock in the afternoon to

consider what he would do. During that time, Gille de Rais was left alone. When the time had expired, he calmly offered a full confession. He admitted the murders, the heresies, the sorceries. Prelati was at once brought to the cell, still weak from his agonies on the rack. The two men then solemnly confirmed each other's words.

After that confession, a change took hold of the Baron. All his insolence had faded. He was now very humble—so humble indeed that on the following day he addressed to his judges a petition that his crimes and his confession should be made public and flung abroad throughout France for all the people to know. “My humiliation,” he said, “will perhaps be the means of winning for me forgiveness hereafter.”

No verdict had yet been pronounced. This, however, was done on the 25th October. Gille was then formally condemned for apostacy, demon-invocation, sacrilege, child-murder and unnatural crimes.

His ordeal was not yet ended. He had been adjudged guilty by the Ecclesiastical Court, but that Court could not pronounce sentence of death. One of the most choice hypocrisies of the Inquisition was its hypocrisy in connection with the taking of life. The Scriptures having said that man's life shall not be destroyed by man, the agile twisters of the Bible surmounted the difficulty by handing over convicted offenders to the “Civil arm.” Equally, as the shedding of human blood is prohibited by Scripture, recourse was had to burning so that the letter of the law might be observed.

The "Civil arm" was quite ready to deal with the Baron. It enfolded him immediately, and once again he was compelled to endure the drawn-out ordeal of a dreary trial, the issues of which had already been decided.

Every nice formality having been observed, the Court at length came to the conclusion that all the indictments had been proved. This same Court had already condemned to the flames *Henriet and Poitou*, the Baron's servants—two ruffians who had been the chief protagonists in his crimes. (All the other accomplices, for some elusive reason were spared.)

And now, the long spun-out business was touching its end. In precise dull tones, the Judge, *Pierre de l'Hôpital*, announced the sentence. All the castles, houses, lands, and mines of the prisoner *Gille de Rais* were to be immediately confiscated, and he himself with his associates was to be first hanged and then burned. That is to say, he was to be half-hanged, and burned whilst he was yet alive.

Gille received the sentence with great calmness. He then turned towards the fathers and mothers of certain of his child victims and begged for their forgiveness. After that, he asked that his two servants might not die believing that he who had brought them to this pass, had escaped justice. This wish was at once granted by the Court. *Gille* then indicated the place where he desired to be buried, and having again asked pardon of the parents, went with bowed head from the place.

The vanity of the criminal asserted itself at that most awful moment of his career, for presently he returned with another request. It would gratify him very much, he said, if the Bishop and every member of the Clergy would walk with him in his procession to the burning-place. This request was also granted, and the Judges seemed to regard it as a very proper and submissive gesture on the part of the condemned.

Every person in Nantes, with the exception of the old and bedridden, came out on the morning of the execution to look upon the man whose deeds were already, even at that early stage, beginning to assume the mystery and the glamour of a legend. One may imagine that during the trial there had been many fantastic inventions on the lips of the ignorant peasants. Simple facts may have been twisted into grotesque fictions. The supposed dealings of Gille with the devil and his imps may have been related in such manner that many simple souls fancied that Gille himself was the Evil One in human shape. Superstition has no limits. The more incredible the story, the more easily is it digested. The dealer in charlatan magic, being well aware of this fact, rarely imposes a good plausible tale upon his dupes. He knows that a plausible tale will be accepted far less readily than the most grotesque fable.

And so the inhabitants of Nantes came to gaze upon Gille, not with the horror and wrath that one might have expected, but rather with a kind of awe. His passage through the streets to the burning-place called forth no yells of hatred, although many people whose children

he had slaughtered must have stood in the crowd on that gloomy autumn day.

When the procession of the three condemned men, accompanied by the Bishop and the clergy, arrived at the place of execution, Gille embraced his servants, humbly begged for their pardon for having brought them to this pass, and said that they and he would surely be forgiven by reason of the Divine Mercy.

The slow process of execution then began. Three enormous mounds of faggots, with a cord suspended from a gallows over each mound, had been set up. After a short service of prayer, the three men were thrust on to the mounds, and the noose was drawn around the neck of each criminal.

A signal was given. Instantly the executioners seized and dragged away the topmost faggots, so that the bodies swung free with the feet a few inches from the surface. The faggots were then drenched with oil and set alight, and the half-hanged wretches were gradually disintegrated by the flames.

Throughout his life, even when he was engaged in murder and sorcery, this man was intensely religious in the narrow sense, observing all the ceremonies of his faith with great precision. It is related that even when he made compacts with the supposed forces of Evil he was illogical enough to demand that the safety of his soul should not be endangered by the bargain.

His personal appearance was very beautiful. It is a remarkable thing that so many famous personages

who have been given to what is called "Sadistic" practices have possessed great physical comeliness. The Marquis de Sade (from whom the word "sadism" derives) was perhaps one of the handsomest men of his time. *Torquemada*, whose religious persecutions were surely to some extent imbued with this same vice, was in his youth the loveliest of men. The student of abnormal psychology may be interested to follow this coincidence further. It does not enter into our speculations in these pages.

The funeral of Gille de Rais was a magnificent ceremony, and we are told that before the ashes were gathered up for burial, many earnest souls took away with them fragments of bones that the fire had spared, believing that these relics of a repentant sinner would serve them well in their own affairs with heaven. Mediæval folk of all classes and all kinds of intellect had little logic and little sense of humour. There seemed to these people nothing incongruous in giving a very splendid funeral to a mass-murderer and sorcerer.

However, the mild attitude of the people of Brittany towards Gille at the time of his death, and for some time afterwards, was gradually exchanged for a kind of legendary terror. For many years after his execution, peasants who happened to be in the neighbourhood of his former abodes would at once cross themselves and send up prayers for protection from the Devil.

The Bluebeard myth has in some unexplained way become associated with the name of Gille de Rais.

In Brittany there was a legend that the reddish beard of the Baron was changed by Satan into a beard of brilliant blue. His name was used for many centuries as a bogey by nurses anxious to quell rebellious children. *That the number of his child-victims was perhaps grossly exaggerated by recorders and by gossips is quite within the range of possibility.* In our own time, we are aware that the Press frequently loves to indulge in the language of exaggeration. The "Hundreds of Victims" of a railway accident often dwindle to a mere twenty. We must allow for exaggeration in the case of this monster of the fifteenth century. But even making the most liberal allowance and saying all that we can say in favour of Gille, we must close his history with the view that he was perhaps the most deliberately cruel intellectual criminal of his age and epoch.

IVAN "THE TERRIBLE" OF RUSSIA

THE Slavonic character is a character admirably adapted to the uses of the tyrant. That is why Russia was for many centuries the victim of an autocratic Czardom, and in a week, the victim of an equally autocratic and barbarous dictatorship. The Russian loves talk but dislikes action. He is the metaphysician of everyday life. He wanders in a vague region where right and wrong exchange their meanings. He accepts all that comes to him with a resignation (partly temperamental, partly religious) that whilst creditable to the philosophical ideal, is hostile to progress—to development—and above all to freedom. The tyranny of Czardom would have been as impossible among an Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian people as the tyranny of Lenin and his successors. It is hardly true to say that a nation has the rulers it deserves. It would be more fitting to affirm that it has the rulers whom its temperament makes possible.

This brief study of Ivan the Fourth, the first Czar of Muscovy (as Russia was then called), is not a political study. The political aspect enters into these pages only in so far as it directly affects the monstrous crimes and devilries of this extraordinary person.

"Ivan the Fourth," said the Polish poet Mickiewicz, "was undoubtedly the most complete and absolute monster known in history. For he united in himself every description of tyranny. At seasons, he was frivolous and debauched like Nero—at times foolish and ferocious like Caligula, and at other times full of deceit like Tiberius or Louis the Eleventh. In his

letters one finds many expressions borrowed from Tiberius, and sometimes, on the other hand, the pedantic gushings of Robespierre, declaiming against the punishment of death and pleading the rights of humanity . . .”

Autocracy had been foreshadowed to some extent by Ivan the Third, a ruler who had preceded him by a number of years, but Ivan had been content to reign under the title of Grand Duke. The fourth Ivan assumed the title of Czar, and in assuming it, became a ruler whose tyranny was of the kind which we call Oriental.

The son of the Grand Duke Vladimir, whom he succeeded, Ivan was born in 1529. His parents died whilst he was a child, and he was educated amid the brutal surroundings of a debauched and semi-savage Court. Before he was fourteen, he had formed very definite views regarding the divine right of kings—an illusion which has served as the basis and the pretext for long centuries of tyranny and horror. (The four years' catastrophe that ended in 1918 was perhaps largely the result of that mediæval illusion persisting in a modern ruler.) At the age of fourteen, Ivan assumed the crown and the title of Czar. A little later, he married Anastasia Zakharina-Koshkina, the daughter of a family who in later years assumed the ill-fated name of Romanoff!

Ivan began his reign quite admirably, exactly as Nero and Caligula began. This excellent beginning was perhaps largely due to the influence of two of his advisers, Alexis Adeshev and a monk, Sylvester. Both

these men were of that saint-like habit which is perhaps met in Russia more often than in any other country. It is a character partly monastic, partly stoical, imbued with religious fervour, and leavened with Pagan philosophy of the strong kind.

In those early years, all went well for Russia. The conquest of Kazan and Astrachan was effected. The country prospered. The people were satisfied that Heaven had sent them an ideal ruler.

Then, suddenly, exactly as it had happened in the case of Caligula, the change came. The man who had delighted his subjects with his amiability, his wisdom, his industry, and a dozen other virtues, became a harsh tyrant. The influence of Adeshev and Sylvester was no longer regarded.

What had happened? Impossible to dogmatize where human character is concerned, but it is conceivable perhaps that Ivan had gradually reached a point of disillusion. Coming to a throne at the age of fourteen, exhausting in a few years and before he had reached maturity, all the legitimate delights of power, he suddenly found himself in a bleak region, where nothing appeared of value. It is at times like these that a man who owns absolute power frequently becomes a degenerate, or a tyrant, or both. In the case of Ivan, there was no physical or mental degeneracy. He retained his fine health—his strong brain. But into his brain or soul (call it what you will) there now entered a demon of cruelty—a love of suffering, sadistic, all-powerful!

He **MUST** see people in torment! That became one

of his dominant passions, and the meek submission of the people served to inflame his lust.

It has been said of him that he was a consummate hypocrite because he was invariably ready to play any part that suited his mood. For instance, his kindness and courtesy to strangers—to foreign envoys—was so conspicuous that they called him "Ivan the Amiable." But frequently he would turn away from an audience with some visitor from abroad—an audience where he had shown himself a master of the most exquisite breeding and gentleness—to order the flagellation of some wretched servant, a flagellation which he would watch with delight, urging on the whipper with bribes or threats—or both!

But perhaps he was not a hypocrite, and indeed the other traits of this strange man's character certainly do not accord with the mummer's art. One imagines that his brutality towards his own people was inspired partly by a love of cruelty—partly by a contempt of the Slavonic character. The Russians in all times have been self-despisers—"the inferiority complex" of which we hear so much nowadays—is a conspicuous feature of the national character. It is possible that Ivan, hating and despising himself, hated and despised still more those wretched people whose characteristics seemed to limp after his own.

In his moody self-despising condition, he was now prepared for savageries and horrors. He loved wholesale murder. He spent a large part of his time planning expeditions against the Turks, using religion as a pretext

for the wars. In order to carry on these campaigns against Moslem, he invited the assistance of this country, and a long correspondence passed between Elizabeth and himself. He actually asked that lady to marry him, ignoring the fact that he already possessed a wife, and indeed several wives. With foolish persistence Ivan continued to pester the Queen. At length, Elizabeth, in desperation, sent a special embassy to Moscow with her final decision. Ivan, enraged by her refusal, tried to pick a quarrel with the ambassador, Sir Jerome Bowes. Bowes, owing to a violent cold, had refrained from removing his hat whilst in the draughty apartment wherein he and his suite had been received, but had, of course, asked forgiveness for the apparent affront. The Czar refused to accept the explanation, and in tones of fury that caused every member of the embassy to quake, swore that he would have the hat nailed to the wearer's head. But even at that time, England was sufficiently powerful to have made things unpleasant for a ruler who attempted pleasantries of the kind, and Sir Jerome returned to this country, wearing his hat in the usual detachable fashion. Probably he had a sense of grim humour, for he described his visit as very enjoyable experience !

Precisely as our modern *nouveaux riches* (or profiteers as they are sometimes called in war-jargon), find at a certain stage of their development that they have a pedigree lurking in the background, so did Ivan suddenly hit upon the theory that he was descended

indirectly from the Cæsars of the Roman Empire. That there was some trivial ground for this theory seems fairly certain. His motive was to gain a pretext for the seizure of certain lands that had been Roman provinces many centuries before that time. The grotesqueness of his action will be patent when it is related that he included Lithuania in his claims, a country of whose existence the Romans of the Cæsarean regime were entirely unaware.

Ivan was grimly humorous when inflicting torments on slaves and others who had incurred his dislike or resentment. One of his favourite amusements was to roll the offending person in a bearskin. Fierce bears were then brought into to worry the wretched victim to death. Whilst the "sport" was in progress, he would make bad jokes—laughing heartily at his imaginary humour. He would urge on the hounds with affectionate cries, and reward them after the kill with chunks of meat, thrown by his own hand.

It is said that he laughed for nearly five minutes on end after a piece of grotesque and horrible cruelty. The episode that roused the prolonged amusement of this monster was in connection with the architect who built for him the magnificent church of Saint Basil the Blessed, in Moscow. Ivan having surveyed the building, rejoiced in the possession of a church so fantastic—so remarkable in design and ornament. He sent for the architect, and having complimented him very graciously on his success, asked blandly whether he would be able to build another church of similar pattern.

The architect, much pleased, and fancying that a further commission was to follow, at once said "Yes," whereupon Ivan immediately ordered that he should be blinded, so that he might not erect a similar building in another city. It was then that he laughed as we have said—and he made a comment on his action. "I always devise simple means of carrying out my desires," he chuckled. "If any of you can devise a simpler method, I would be happy if you told me of it. . . ."

It certainly cannot be urged in extenuation or semi-extenuation of the horrors perpetrated by this monster that he was stupid, half-witted. He was a man of fine brain—a good dialectician—a letter-writer of charm and versatility. He loved argument—was a clever casuist. It is possible, however, that his arguments carried a certain weight that might otherwise have been lacking, by reason of the fact that he invariably used during the debates a stick with a sharp-pointed spike at foot. This stick he would press into the foot of his opponent, and the argument usually ended abruptly in favour of the Czar.

After the habit of tyrants of all times and all nations, Ivan suddenly conceived violent rages against unoffending people and sets of people. At one stage of his reign he inaugurated a violent persecution of the nobility of Russia—a nobility that had always shown an almost exaggerated loyalty to himself and to his predecessors. A war of extermination was begun by Ivan. Noble families were murdered *en bloc*. Sometimes he would himself take part in the slaughters. Nor were his

personal friends spared. One old noble who had refused to join in certain degrading festivities was executed by being hanged in the banqueting-room. Another who was too feeble to drink a toast was drowned in a vat of wine!

A number of the aristocrats took refuge in Poland. Prince Kourski, a good patriot, wrote to him from exile this letter :

“Monarch, once illustrious, but now for our sins overcome by an insane rage—who are unequalled among the most cruel rulers of the world—who, though yourself skilled in calumny, give to your faithful servants the name of traitors. Is there no God—no supreme tribunal for kings. . . . You will see me no more until the Day of Judgment. You do not fear the living. At least, you shall fear the dead. Those persons whom you have shamefully massacred are waiting for you by the throne of the Almighty . . .”

The Czar, unable to retaliate upon the Prince in more practical fashion, had recourse to the pen. He addressed to him a number of letters, charged with taunts. “If indeed you are the high-minded and noble personage that you claim to be, why did you run away from Russia?” he enquired. “Why did you not remain there and gain for yourself an everlasting crown of martyrdom by resenting my wrath?” The letters were packed with specious theology, calculated to wound the Prince’s religious principles.

After a further massacre of three hundred nobles on the plea that they were conspiring with the Poles

against himself, Ivan was suddenly seized with a sort of spasmodic remorse. He announced his intention of abandoning the throne—of leaving Moscow and living in retirement the life of a hermit. This resolve was conveyed by him in a letter to the Metropolitan of Moscow. The government of the country, he added, *was to be in the hands of the Boyards.*

A *spirited, less metaphysical people*, would have greeted this announcement with joy. But the Russian temperament with its caution—its fear of a worse exchange—was by no means ready to accept this resignation. The courtiers, the clergy, the more important subjects of Ivan, begged him to remain. It is possible they may have feared a sudden revolution wherein they themselves would be mortally involved. Or perhaps they may have recognized that Ivan, with all his crimes, was a man of powerful intellect and energy. Whatever their motives, they offered a strong remonstrance, and Ivan, much flattered, secretly delighted, consented to retain his throne, but with the condition that henceforth his power should be absolute—that is to say, he would no longer submit his decisions to any kind of criticism.

There followed a sudden—an inexplicable *volte-face*. For, after this confidence had been extended to him by his people, he actually abdicated the throne in favour of a Tartar prince, Prince Kazan of Kazan, whom he had taken prisoner after the fall of the city.

The next action of this extraordinary man was to take up his abode in a forest. The hermit existence was,

however, only a pose, for he took with him a bodyguard of several thousand men, who bore a badge representing a dog and a broom. The dog symbolized his power of biting his enemies—the broom stood for his intention of sweeping them out of life.

The "hermit" of the forest now began to play tricks *hardly consistent with the traditional hermit way of existence*. Ivan, revelling perhaps in the grotesque paradox of the situation, undertook huge expeditions, whereof plunder was the objective. He would descend with a large number of his guards upon the lands of nobles and confiscate them; giving the terrified owners a choice between instant flight and instant death. For many miles round the "hermitage" the people were terrorized and cowed. Ivan wearing the simple garb of a hermit would sometimes inaugurate the raids with prayer and hymns!

Ivan inaugurated in the forest "hermitage" a sort of monastic regime. He would rise from his rough bed at an unearthly hour of the morning and would himself ring the bell for matins. Afterwards, he would perform religious services that sometimes endured for several hours, boring the soldiers, who had not imagined that this sort of experience would form part of their routine. The Czar derived huge amusement from the sight of men, who a few minutes previously had been blaspheming, dicing, and fighting, forced into attitudes of devotion. The thing probably appealed to his decidedly twisted sense of humour. Sometimes, whilst praying eloquently, whilst invoking sweet comfort from heaven, he would

break off to issue a bloodthirsty threat against some inattentive "devotee."

He loved preaching long-winded sermons, illustrated with sayings from the poets. He preached on the vanity of mortal life and the futility of human wishes. He was probably sincere enough whilst he was preaching. The bitter knowledge has long since been borne in upon humanity that there is no dividing line between religious zeal and love of cruelty.

It was perhaps due to this horrible inconsistency that Ivan was enabled to steal away from a religious service wherein he had celebrated the love and tolerance of Christ, to betake himself to the prison, where he would revel in the sight of men writhing in torments which he had commanded. He would stand rigid with joy, watching the faces growing white with agony. Then he would go back to the "hermitage" and sing hymns!

Nemesis was now coming down upon Ivan. That goddess, beloved of the Greeks, has an excellent memory, and if she keeps a ledger, we may be sure that it is always written-up. The first sign of the break-up of the monstrous Czar was a violent seizure of insomnia. He would go to his bed very early in the evening, but, unable to sleep, would rise and pace his room all night, talking to himself. His teller of stories and his reciter would be brought to soothe him with their wares, but they went in such terror of him that they were not able to display their talents with any success.

His brain was now beginning to weaken. One of the first symptoms of certain forms of mental degeneration is the tendency towards great and overwhelming schemes, conceived in a moment, and hailed as perfected measures before they have been considered for an hour. In this mood, Ivan contemplated many great projects. One of them was to take the form of a complete reorganization of Russia.

But the "reorganizations" of men of his fibre are usually destructive rather than constructive. His scheme with characteristic savagery was to wipe out at one stroke the Boyards,—to exterminate many of the more important citizens and a number of the common people. With what remained after this general slaughter, Ivan was prepared to build a new Russia.

It must be said in his favour, however, that he contemplated many excellent reforms which the means at his disposal did not allow him to bring to fruition or even to an elementary stage of action. It was left to a later autocrat, Peter the Great, to institute the reforms that Ivan had dimly foreshadowed. That Ivan, in spite of his monstrous cruelty, his savage rages, loved Russia and desired the welfare of the people, we may feel tolerably certain.

It may perhaps be said of him that he was like a man who is being pulled in varying directions by a tame horse and a wild horse. The tame horse leads him towards good roads and safe journeys, the wild horse tries to urge him over the precipice. It was that wild horse in the soul or brain of Ivan "the Terrible" that urged him to

many massacres. One of the most inexcusable of these savageries was the massacre of the relatives of the good Philip, Metropolitan of Moscow. The offence of Philip was that he had made a mild remonstrance to the Czar in connection with some trivial affair. Philip himself he could not kill, for the sacred office that he held must be continued, and there was no person ready to take his place. Ivan therefore revenged himself on the harmless relatives, everyone of whom was put to death by horrible torments. After this was done, he suddenly decided that Philip must suffer too, though in less spectacular fashion. He ordered the Metropolitan to be arrested whilst in the act of celebrating the Mass. He was then flogged through the Moscow streets, and flung into prison for many weeks !

The Czar was grossly superstitious. When about to march on the city of Pskoff (and had the march been carried out, there is little question that the city would have fallen), he suddenly turned back, because he had encountered a funeral party. He lived in constant dread of omens and portents.

The sudden rages of Ivan were perhaps the most terrible features of his temperament. These rages fell upon him so swiftly that even his most close associates could rarely determine when they were about to burst. For instance, whilst seated at dinner, he would perhaps comment humorously on the deficiencies of some dish, joking with apparent good humour concerning the cook. An instant later, his eyes would bulge—his face grow

ashen with rage—his body tremble. He would then dart up from the table, and in a voice so thick—so tempestuous that it was hardly recognizable—pour forth torrents of the foulest abuse upon the wretched cook. Sometimes, his "entourage" was able to soothe him, but at other times, the innocent person who had aroused his rage suffered floggings or death. The courtiers trembled when they spoke to their master—never for a moment could they be tolerably sure of his mood. And yet, as has been said, when his people had the opportunity to support his abdication proposal, they refused and begged him to remain.

The greatest sorrow of the life of this man came to him in the year 1580, when one of his characteristic rages caused him to strike down his surviving son, Ivan, to whom he was devoted. This boy had shown great talents, and Ivan had looked forward to his succeeding him when the time came, as master of Russia. His grief was as profound as the rage which had inspired the blow; for many days he could not speak to any person, but paced up and down his room, like a man in a cell who is awaiting execution. His eyes assumed a sort of greenish stare—a stare that so terrified his servants that they dared not look at him when they brought him his food.

It was said of Ivan that no man at any time had seen him look happy, but always his face had worn a fierce smile of defiance. That smile was now no longer on his

lips. He looked, it is related, like a man who has been down to hell, and looks forward to his return there as an escape from the hell of this present world. He longed to die, but had not the courage to strike the blow.

One year after the murder of his son Ivan, whilst feebly endeavouring to play chess with a friend who had taught him the game, was seized with a stroke of some kind, the nature of which has not been definitely stated. He fell back in a fainting condition, and was at once taken to his bed.

When he recovered from this attack, he said that he would now show that he was indeed remorseful for what he had done, and that no longer would he play at monastic practices, but would enter an accepted order and remain there until he died.

His attendants and friends, perceiving that his peace of mind was imperilled, and that unless he carried out his desire, insanity might seize his already weakening brain, made no attempt to dissuade Ivan from this purpose. And so, he went at last to the life of the cell and stayed there until the end. And, on a certain morning of the year 1584, this autocrat, who had slaughtered many thousands in war and many thousands in peace—who had tortured, flogged, stabbed, burned, drowned, hated, cursed, and brought supreme anguish wherever he penetrated, passed away in a narrow bed in the monastery. They said of him that “Brother Jonah had gone to God in peace and happy repentance!”

In partial extenuation of the character of this monstrous Emperor of Russia, let us bear in mind that his age was a conspicuously brutal age, and that Russia, sunk in dull and sullen ignorance, was perhaps in some respects the most savage of all countries of Europe. In a land where a bride on her wedding-morning presented her husband with a whip as a sign of complaisant servitude—where a woman who killed her master was buried alive and left to starve to death whilst the wife-killer was only gently punished, one could hardly expect a high degree of gentleness and love.

Ivan was not all bad. We have said that he endeavoured to shadow forth many reforms, and in religious matters he showed a tolerance far beyond his epoch. Hating the drunkenness of his people, he made hard efforts to bring about a more temperate state. Himself a man of wide education, he loved culture, and it was largely due to his enterprise that the printing press was introduced into Russia. His reign was successful enough. During that reign there were many conquests—much land was added to the Empire. Siberia was discovered, and was partially subdued. But if the printing press was one of the beneficent features of Ivan's reign, we must remember at the same time that the horrible weapon called the "knout" was used for the first time during his occupation of the throne.

The printing press and the knout! The symbols of two forces that to the end must be deadly foes, the press standing for freedom and for light, the knout for persecution and darkness. That these came to Russia

in the time of Ivan seems an *interesting thing* when we ponder his character.

For surely they symbolize the two sides of this dark soul's nature. The whip, the symbol of his demoniacal cruelty—the printing press, the symbol of a fainting spirit that struggled feebly towards the light.

IF some ingenious medium could enable us to talk to Shakespeare, we should like to ask the poet whether he wrote the tragedy *Arden of Feversham*.

Published long after his death, it has been attributed to him by more than one critic, but the balance of evidence seems to deny the authorship. It is true that certain phrases—certain twists of thought—suggest the writer of *Macbeth* and *Richard III*, but the variety of emotion and the philosophy that are essential parts of the Shakespearean work, find no place in *Arden of Feversham*.

Nevertheless, the anonymous poet who wrote this tragedy was an alchemist of some value, for he has taken the sordid, the almost absurd episodes of a stupid domestic crime, and turned them into gold. Here are the episodes (stripped of rhythm and embroidery of thought), set down in their simple horror.

Thomas Arden was a private gentleman of some wealth living at Feversham where he had a large house, a garden, several servants, and a young and handsome wife. Arden himself was a shapely, good-looking fellow, but his wife soon turned her back on him and fell in love with a swarthy brute, half-mulatto, called Mosbie. This Mosbie, a servant to a nobleman, stayed for some time at the Ardens' house, where he helped himself to their belongings with the effrontery of a servant placed above stairs, and at last seduced Mrs. Arden.

So obsessed was Alice Arden with this man that she made no attempt to conceal the "liaison"—and it was believed that the husband guessed what was happening, but kept silent for a reason which did not do him credit. His wife had expectations of considerable legacies from relatives. He feared that she might eventually be robbed of the legacies if the affair became a public scandal.

Now there was apparently no reason why Alice Arden, infatuated with Mosbie, should not have gone on with the affair until one or both of them wearied of it. There was, on the surface, no reason why the husband should be removed. The poor fellow was effacing himself—letting them do as they pleased. But we must remember that the tendency of certain women when violently and physically attracted to a lover is to conceive an insane hatred for the harmless husband. Alice now developed this hatred, and presently set herself deliberately to find a means of killing him.

Is the person who coolly plans a murder a thing apart—a creature railed off from other people? Certain psychologists believe that the murderer is very much like the rest of us, but is of a weak fibre that cannot resist temptation to destroy when destruction will bring profit or pleasure. The writer does not think this. He thinks that the professional murderer (as distinguished from the impulsive or revengeful destroyer, who is often a very admirable creature) is an isolated being—different in many important directions from the non-killer. But what about War? retorts the super-

ficial critic. Does not the most decent fellow if he kill sufficient of the enemy develop a certain indifference to life? The answer to this, of course, is that the soldier *is* a murderer who all the time is trading on false values.

Let us say then that Alice Arden, like all other deliberate murderers, was a thing apart. She took the line of least resistance and set out to kill her husband because the mere fact of his existence troubled her sense of comfort.

In remote days, there was frequently some adjacent person, ready to aid those who contemplated murder. Very soon Alice Arden had called in the assistance of a neighbouring artisan who was said to sell poisons. This man was a painter, and his trade put him in possession of certain crude chemicals. The first dose given to Arden was given in milk. The woman made the common mistake of administering too large a dose. Arden was very sick, and vomited the stuff.

She was not discouraged. Her next action was to seek out a man called Green—the steward of an adjoining estate. This fellow had a grudge against Mr. Arden because the latter had enraged him in connection with some business transaction. Green after some hesitation consented to aid the woman to kill her husband.

Chance brought Green in contact with the very person suitable to carry out the crime. On his way to London with his neighbour, Mr. Bradshaw, the two met a party of thieves. One of them, a ruffian called “Black Will,” was known to Bradshaw, who pointed

him out to his companion as a desperate scoundrel ready for any devilish traffic.

The thieves were surprised to receive a welcome and not a repulse. "Black Will" himself was greeted as an old acquaintance by Bradshaw, who had served with him in the Army (presumably before the thief took to the highway). Green then took him aside, and asked if he would accompany them to an inn, where he would explain his business with him.

He was a picturesque sort of ruffian this "Black Will," full of "strange oaths," with something of the gipsy perhaps in his origin. He answered at once—"I know not, neither do I care, which way I go. I will set up my stick and go in the direction it falls. He did this. The stick fell in the direction in which Green and his friend were travelling, and "Will" went with them.

Late that night, the queerly assorted trio sat over their supper, and at the end of it, Green crudely and frankly explained his errand. He offered "Will" £10 for the killing of Arden. "Will" coolly replied, "Yes, by my blood, I will do this, if the man is shown to me." A little later, Green wrote to Alice Arden, "I think that we have now got a man for our purpose, but we may thank Bradshaw for it."

Now Bradshaw, who knew nothing of the contemplated crime, took the letter in the morning to Mrs. Arden, whilst Green and the ruffian continued on the journey to London.

Green knew that Mr. Arden was frequently in St. Paul's Churchyard on business at a certain time. He

took "Will" to that place so that he might point out the destined victim. The bloodthirsty brute wished to despatch him immediately, but Green restrained him. "There are too many people in the Churchyard," he said. "Wait a little."

The conspiracy that held three people was presently extended to four. Michael, a manservant of Arden, who for some reason known only to himself hated his master and wished his death, was now taken into the council.

The first attempt was made at Mr. Arden's town house. Michael arranged that the outer door should be left open at night so that "Will" might enter. But when night came, Michael, lying awake, was suddenly seized with violent terror, lest the half-savage brute should murder him as well as his master. Obsessed by this sudden terror, he ran downstairs and bolted the door against the murderer's approach. That is how the first attempt failed.

Next morning, Green having heard from "Will" of his failure to enter the house, waylaid Michael and stormed furiously. Michael having soothed him with a plausible invention, then suggested that the next attack should be made that night, when he and Arden would be travelling home to Feversham. Green then arranged with "Will" that the wretched man should be waylaid when passing over Rainham Down, a very lonely place.

All went according to plan except for the main issue. For once again Michael was seized with fear concerning

his own safety. In order to delay their progress till the next morning, he pricked his horse and sent the animal lame. Arden, who was in a hurry to reach home, rode on ahead. Presently he met some friends who were also riding back to Feversham and so the second attempt failed like the first, through the sudden cowardice of the man Michael.

Alice Arden was enraged and disgusted when the news of the second breakdown was given her, but she was by no means discouraged. Having abused the servant very coarsely, she set herself to find a new method of despatch.

Now that morning, a letter had arrived for Arden from Sir Thomas Cheney, a local squire. She bade Michael tell Arden that the letter was mislaid, and that in order to ascertain the contents, it would be well for him to ride over to the house, which was situated at the end of a long and very lonely road. "Will" and a new accomplice, a filthy ruffian called George Shakcbag, were to follow Michael and his master and to bludgeon him to death.

There seems something almost farcical in what followed. For Michael, *for the third time*, was obsessed by fear of the ruffians taking his life at the same moment as the life of his master. Suddenly, he made a pretext for abandoning the journey to Sir Thomas—and the two horsemen returned to the house at Feversham in safety.

Three carefully planned adventures had now failed.

Mrs. Arden was desperate. In her despair, she now called in the aid of her lover, Mosbie. Mosbie, who apparently was no worse than the average sensual man of his time—ready to make love and fight but not ready to do cold murder—at first refused to help in the horrible business. He was willing, however, to pick a quarrel with Arden and to take his chance of killing him in a duel. This plan was not carried into action, for Arden refused to fight.

The conspirators then gained another member, for a maid of Mrs. Arden was taken into the affair. It is clear to us who look at these events with the discerning eyes of far-off critics that the woman was in a condition when she felt that she must have as many allies as possible. In no other way can we explain this conspiracy on the grand scale.

A meeting then took place between Alice Arden, Mosbie, Green, "Will," and the fellow Shakebag. Once again, Mosbie indignantly refused to be a party to murder. He left the house in a fury. But Mrs. Arden immediately sent after him a messenger, begging him, for love of her, to come back. The wretched man, whose will was half merged in hers by reason of his passion, returned. She went down on her knees to him, and with hysterical fury, begged him to remain and help to forward the scheme.

At length, he surrendered. Perhaps some pity for the kneeling woman stirred him. He now promised to hold back no further. The conspirators then planned the details for the fourth and last time!

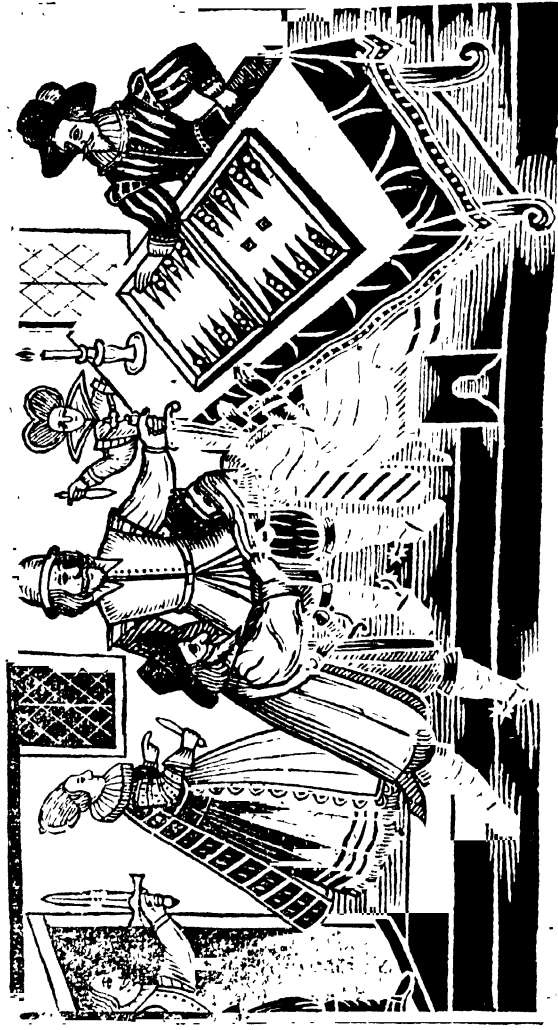
That night was chosen for the crime. All the servants with the exception of the maid were sent away on errands that would detain them for several hours. "Will" was then taken to the house and hidden in a closet that adjoined the parlour where in the evenings Arden was accustomed to sit.

Mosbie had consented to act as the decoy who would give the signal for the attack. And so we find him that night, between the hours of six and seven, sitting in the parlour with Arden, playing a game of draughts. It was believed that the attack would be made more easy if the attention of the victim were fixed on his game.

Picture the scene ! One cannot wonder that it burned itself into the imagination of poets and produced at length more than one drama ! The quiet, dimly lighted room ; the two men crouched over the draught-board ; the murderer waiting in the dark closet ; the wife in another room asking herself what was going to happen next. Would this adventure end as the others had ended, or would to-night bring to her the freedom for which she craved ?

All went as they had planned. Arden was hotly interested in his game. Suddenly, Mosbie said in a loud voice : "*Now, sir, I can take you if I please.*" That was the signal ! Arden replied smilingly, "Take me, then ! " As he spoke those words "Will" came from the cupboard and half stifled him with a heavy cloth, whilst Mosbie struck him fourteen times over the head with a heavy pressing-iron. They carried him to the adjoining counting-house, where "Will" slashed his face and

complaint and lamentation of *Mistresse Arden* of
Faversham in *Kent*, who for the love of one *Mobie*, hired certaine *Ruffians*
to Villaines most cruelly to murder her Husband; with the fatal end of her and her
Associats.
To the tune of, *Fortune my Foe*.



ALICE ARDEN OF FAVERSHAM

robbed him of his watch and all his money. Then, having stripped the fingers of their rings, he coolly buttoned his coat, rubbed his hands, and said, "The business is over. Give me my money." Mrs. Arden paid him £10, and he went away at once.

But the woman had not yet finished with her hated husband. Picking up a dinner-knife, she stabbed the dying man eight times! Soon after he was dead, the murderers cleaned the room, and flung the cloth and the knife into a tub by a well, where those articles were afterwards discovered.

It is of the very essence of the deliberate murderer's character that he can follow the ordinary routine of life after the doing of a crime, the horrors of which, when merely read by decent people, would hold them from routine for at least a few hours. And so it came about that after Mrs. Arden had washed her hands, and arranged her clothes for a supper party, she coolly sent her maid to invite to the meal two Londoners who were staying at an adjacent inn.

The supper was a merry business. Alice Arden ate and drank heartily. There were present also Mosbie, his sister, and two daughters of Mrs. Arden. Afterwards, one of them played on the virginals and there was dancing and singing.

At length, however, the woman decided that the time had come when she must play a part and pretend to feel surprise at her husband's absence. "He has rarely returned so late," she protested, and then proposed

a game of cards to pass the time. The Londoners, however, refused on the grounds that they must return to their inn, otherwise they would be locked out. A very life-like incident this. Its very triviality and familiarity seems to recall the horror of that night four hundred years ago more vividly than a hundred dramatic and strange happenings !

The visitors went away, and the servants came home. Mrs. Arden now assuming great anxiety, despatched them in various directions to find their master. Immediately after they had gone, the body was carried to a field some ten paces from the house. The murderers used a door that was very rarely employed, so that if any of the servants returned in a few minutes, there would be no encounter.

Midnight passed. Again, the servants were sent out to search, Mrs. Arden being now apparently hysterical with anxiety. The Mayor was summoned. He procured certain officers, and a rigid search was begun.

The body was speedily discovered in the field. Footmarks leading from that place to the garden door were then traced. The Mayor then ordered one of his people to enter the Ardens' house by the ordinary door, and so penetrate the house, issuing through the garden exit. They did this, and there found muddy footmarks exactly corresponding to the marks discovered near the corpse. Never was a crime more carefully planned and more clumsily covered up ! Had Mrs. Arden and her accomplices desired to be suspected, they could hardly have acted with more consummate stupidity.

In those crude times of the sixteenth century, the preliminary measures of criminal action were more hasty than is the custom to-day. One can hardly picture a modern police officer arresting a wife within five minutes of the discovery of her husband's body. The Mayor, however, took this course. He was aware of the intrigue with Mosbie, which by that time had become the subject of village gossip, and urged on by the knowledge, he entered the house and taxed her with the crime. Assuming a defiant manner, she said at once: "I would have you to know that I am no such woman." But later, when the evidence of the towel and the knife were produced, she suddenly collapsed and confessed. "The blood of God help me, for this blood have I shed," she sobbed.

After that, matters moved very quickly. Mosbie was arrested within an hour at the Fleur-de-Lys Inn, where he was quietly asleep. Mrs. Arden's daughters and the maidservant were also taken to the adjacent prison. Mosbie, on being charged with complicity in the crime, bluffed and lied, but he was a weak fellow, and speedily broke down, making confession. His sister was arrested that same night. "Black Will" seems to have escaped attention, together with the man who had in the beginning sold poison to Alice Arden, though it is probable they were hanged at a later time for other crimes.

The members of this sordid conspiracy were kept for trial at the Feversham Assizes. Unfortunately, there is no complete or even approximately complete account

of the proceedings, but we may conclude that they were simple enough in view of the confessions of all the persons indicted. Indeed, the only complication was the inclusion in the indictment of the man Bradshaw. For some reason, whose nature we are unable to guess, Alice Arden saw solemnly fit to inculcate this innocent man. He was arrested, and stood his trial with the guilty ones. As a matter of fact, his sole association with the events that followed was the fact that he had innocently and perhaps jestingly pointed out to Green the ruffian "Black Will" as a man capable of any devilry.

It is to the credit of all those persons (with the exception of Alice Arden) who stood that day in the dock at Feversham, that they repudiated the supposed complicity of Bradshaw and swore that he was unknown to them. Justice, which in former times preferred to hang innocent men rather than let one guilty man escape, chose to prefer the vindictive oath of Alice Arden. The wretched Bradshaw was found guilty and was condemned with the others.

We are not told by the chronicler what happened to Mrs. Arden's daughters. Perhaps the most irritating characteristic of the criminal historians of old times is their tendency to linger lovingly over irrelevant detail throughout many dull pages and incontinently omit important facts. They frequently introduce an essential character, and proceed to drop him out of the record without explanation or apology.

However, though the chronicle is blurred, it has been

sufficiently clear to reveal to us that Bradshaw, Michael (the manservant), Mosbie, and Mosbie's sister, were hanged, and that Green was caught a few years afterwards and was tried and executed, after having gone through the useless process of exonerating the unfortunate Bradshaw.

Alice Arden and her maid were burned to death! The Law sometimes held that hanging was too easy a death for a woman—it is only in comparatively recent times that criminal administration has shown more indulgence to women than to men. The reverse custom prevailed in the happy days of our forefathers! Moreover, Alice, by killing her husband, had been guilty of “petty treason,” the husband, we presume, being regarded as a petty sovereign in his own domain. Why the maid who was merely a servant should also have been burned we cannot explain, except on the ground already suggested, that a woman must suffer more heavily than the privileged man.

The story of the murder of Thomas Arden is distinguished from the many hundreds of crimes of like nature by the fact that so many people took part in the conspiracy. Indeed, the affair resembled an organized political or religious assassination rather than a private horror.

The irritating chronicler leaves unanswered one absorbing question. Why were all these people ready to take part in the business? There is no evidence to suggest that Arden was the kind of man to arouse

hatred or even dislike. There is no evidence, indeed, that any of the conspirators with the exception of Green, had the smallest grudge against him. How came it then that Mrs. Arden found so many supporters? Perhaps the sole explanation is that she was a woman of extraordinary gifts in the direction of imposing her will upon other people. She probably bullied, threatened, cajoled, and pleaded, according to the temperament of the person whom she wished to subdue.

The play sometimes attributed to Shakespeare was followed at a later time by a drama written by George Lillo, who also wrote that classic of the barnstormers, *George Barnwell*. Lillo's play, whilst on a lower plane than the anonymous work in regard to imagery and characterization, is nevertheless a sound piece of drama. Plays founded on striking domestic dramas were frequent in the sixteenth century, and the early part of the seventeenth. *Arden of Feversham*, the anonymous tragedy, is perhaps the finest specimen of that class of work.

MARY FRITH ("MOLL CUTPURSE")

A SIXTEENTH-CENTURY MISTRESS OF THE UNDERWORLD*

TWO essential facts distinguish "Moll Cutpurse," thief, highwayman, and procuress, from the many hundreds of criminal women who infested London during the stormy times of the late sixteenth century. She dressed in male's clothes and she died in her bed. A third point of distinction is that she lived to the age of seventy-three—a very tremendous age for a person whose life is given up to crime. The majority of criminals are short-lived.

In 1589, in the Barbican of London, Mary Frith, afterwards to become famous in the pages of the *Newgate Calendar*, as "Moll Cutpurse," was born of a shoemaker father and a mother who was probably the most excellent woman that ever gave birth to a monster of wickedness. Students of heredity would find Mary Frith a hard case. There was nothing to account for her swift and sudden falling-off. The father worked hard at his bench, loved a quiet chat about politics and was probably a good Radical (like many shoemakers), and probably in his later years, an adherent of Mr. Oliver Cromwell. The mother educated the child—or at least tried to educate her, but Mary, hating any kind of restraint from the age of three, refused to learn. She would bite, spit, and perform a trick that afterwards became one of her most notorious habits. She would twist her face into contortions so horrible that people said she was inhabited by the devil. Her chief delight was to hang about the doorways of taverns, leering at men

when she was little more than twelve years old. Feminine labours such as sewing, she loathed. One chronicler has written : " A sampler was to her as grievous as a shroud." She loved a street fight, and long before she was twenty could hold her own with a lusty youth of her own age.

She was repulsively ugly, this Mary Frith, and presently she decided that she would never attract men, but must aggressively compel them to yield her a certain solace. Abandoning her girl's clothes, she bought at a second-hand dealer's a complete suit of male clothing, and from that time to the end of her life, she wore breeches and coat. She walked like a man, with long swinging strides, swore heavily and invented new oaths. It was said of her that she could outswear and outdrink any coalheaver in the City.

This eccentric young woman possessed an incongruous relative—an uncle clergyman. A family council was held, and the parson suggested that Mary should be sent abroad. New England, the recently formed Puritan colony, was proposed, but Mary having agreed to the suggestion, incontinently changed her mind, and having joined the vessel at Gravesend, swam ashore soon after it had sailed. She returned to London, and went home. Her friends then found for her a situation as a domestic servant. But Mary having refused to abandon her masculine dress, this project had to be put aside.

She had no intention of working. Already she had performed several small acts of thieving, and presently she left home and began to frequent the most vile taverns



MOLL CUTPURSE.

*See here the Presidessè oth pilfring Trade'
 Mercuryes second Venus's onely Mayd
 Doublet and breeches in a Un'form dresse
 The female Humurrist a Kickshaw messe
 Here no attraction that your fancy greets
 But if her FEATURES please not read her FEATS*

and houses of ill-fame. Here she was received with great delight, her quaint contortions and her rough language delighting the Alsatians of the district.

It has been said that every person possesses a talent of some kind, but that the majority of men and women die without knowing it. Mary soon hit upon her essential talent. It lay in the direction of a wonderful skill for the cutting out of pockets from the coat-tails of rich citizens. Her long thin hands had the skill of the conjurer. She boasted that she could beat any male pick-pocket of long experience. It was this genius for the slicing of pockets that brought her the title of "Moll Cutpurse." She revelled in her gift, and said that it served her better than beauty would have served her. "Good looks often bring a girl a shameful brat," she is reported to have said. "But cutting purses will cause no woman sorrow."

However, although Moll had no illusions regarding her appearance, she was not disposed to go through life without amorous adventures. She was indeed a young woman of erotic habits, and she had her own method of securing embraces. Having hit upon a man whom she admired, she would, by sheer force of muscle, compel him to make love to her. The unfortunate youth was battered into subjection, and would eventually surrender to avoid further ill-usage. Moreover, she would sometimes use bribes as well as blows, and reward a satisfactory lover with shillings or guineas, according to the state of her exchequer.

The atavists would say that Moll had reverted to

type—that the primordial cave ancestor was bobbing up in this grimy, raucous-toned creature, who dressed as a man and was more brutal than most of her male friends. This is not the place to discuss theories, but one may ask why the primordial ancestry does not display itself more often, if indeed it is to be reckoned as an essential explanation of crime and savagery. It is possible that the atavistic theory will go the way of other theories concerning crime—and be scrapped with them.

Unlike the ordinary thief, Moll was no extravagant spender. Carefully she hoarded her earnings, and frequently added to her income by fortune-telling and other charlatan tricks of the kind. Her methods had the simplicity of genius. If the client was satisfied and paid uncomplainingly, all was well; if not, Moll by sheer bullying and terrorizing, forced the dupe to pay. So terrifying were her face and manner that the wretched servant girls and apprentices, who were her chief clients, frequently became so cowed that they would yield to the most extortionate demands. She varied her predictions according to the possibilities of payment. If a client seemed likely to yield a good harvest, she would predict a rich marriage, with all the appropriate trappings; if, on the other hand, there seemed small chance of liberal payment, then a horrible future was solemnly allotted to the innocent seeker after knowledge.

She joined a society of petty thieves whose operations were confined within narrow limits. They would waylay

children in the street, and having knocked them into the gutter, would steal from them money entrusted to the youngsters for errands. They would break open shop-tills, pick pockets, and generally undertake petty crimes that called for little skill and involved small risk.

Moll did not invariably escape. More than once she was arrested and convicted, and by some remarkable luck got off cheaply enough. Several times she was branded on the hands, but this process was not always the severe punishment conveyed by the words, for she was able to bribe the officiating person, so that the branding process became little more than a perfunctory business.

It was impossible, however, for a woman of Moll's talents to remain content with street thieving. She aimed at a higher target. The roads in those stormy times of the Civil War were infested with highwaymen, and presently Moll decided to join those adventurous souls. A good loyalist—devoted to the cause of King Charles the First, she hated the Roundheads, and vowed that she took to the road merely that she might rob and victimize the enemies of the King.

Her boldness—her contempt of danger and of death—and her fine horsemanship enabled her to make a success of the highwayman business, and presently she was able to gratify her political bias by "holding up" no less a personage than General Fairfax, whom she robbed of a very considerable sum. Fairfax, of course, put up a good fight, but apparently he was no match for Moll,

who not only wounded him in the arm but killed two of his horses.

Now had any other man but Fairfax been thus molested and outraged, there is no doubt that the culprit on being caught would have been summarily hanged. But Fairfax was more amused than infuriated. It seemed to him a very extraordinary piece of work for a woman to accomplish, and this admiration on his part proved of excellent service to Moll Cutpurse when, at a later time, she was found guilty and sentenced to die. For the General, having learned that she was a woman of means, proposed that she should compromise the affair for an adequate sum. Moll handed over £2000, and was immediately released. Funds were urgently needed by the rebels, and they were not disposed to question too closely the source of their supplies. It is possible, however, that even had the bribe not been available, Fairfax would have been generous enough to see that her life was spared.

After this adventure, Moll desiring a rest from her labours on the highway, took a public-house in Fleet Street, London. It was whilst she was hostess of this tavern, that she hit upon the notion of receiving and selling stolen goods. The practice in those days was not contrary to the law.

She speedily became known to half the thieves, foot-pads, and bullies of the town, as a safe and reliable tradeswoman, who would not only give a good price, but would never "peach"—on a friend. There was no touch of Jonathan Wild in the nature of Moll. A monster

of deceit and cruelty, she was nevertheless loyal to her Alsatian mob as she was loyal to the King.

She invented new kinds of robberies. She encouraged thieves to steal the books of merchants and tradesmen, knowing that the owners would be willing to buy back at a good price these records of their transactions. The houses of rich people and of noblemen were searched for compromising letters, and a good business in blackmail was carried on by Moll and her friends.

All this was bad enough, but a writer would hesitate to place Mary Frith in a gallery of monstrous villains but for a certain horrible traffic that formed an essential part of her dealings in crime. For she carried on for a considerable time the trade of a procuress. To the tavern in Fleet Street there would come rich men who desired young and unfledged girls. Moll would go out into the streets, waylay young women seeking situations, and especially girls who had come to London after running away from home. Having brought them to her house, she would cajole or terrify them into submission. More than that, she would sometimes through a peephole in the wall, gloat over their sufferings, enjoying a sort of vicarious delight when she beheld brutalities. Girls who offered hard resistance were flogged by her into submission. It has been suggested that Moll, cheated by her ugliness and masculinity from the spontaneous passion of men, was delighted to see her sex suffer—and loved to gloat over its humiliation.

Hating the Rump Parliament and anxious to victimize and harass the Revenue, she encouraged forgers and

smugglers to put forth all their energies. That she was sincere enough in this hatred is proved by the fact that many of the crimes thus promoted brought her no reward.

Money came to her from many quarters. She maintained a regiment of thieves of both sexes. She herself frequently went out on purse-cutting expeditions. Moreover, the money earned by her horrible trade of procuring swelled her savings. She loved crime for its own sake—would never have been happy in other occupation. She would smoke a clay pipe, swear, drink, and tell a lewd story with any man in Drury Lane or St. Giles's!

For a long time, Moll Cutpurse did not come into contact with the law. When at length the law saw fit to come down upon her, it showed an eccentricity in its choice of an indictment only matched by a modern eccentricity that makes "criminals" of tradesmen who sell sweets and cigarettes after eight o'clock. For, having shut its eyes to her forgeries, street robberies, and other crimes, it solemnly arrested her on the charge of "indecently and publicly wearing male attire."

Moll enjoyed the privilege of a trial before the Court of Arches. After the absurd proceedings had dragged their slow length, she was adjudged guilty and was sentenced to do penance, dressed in a white sheet, on the following Sunday morning at St. Paul's Cathedral. Moll was by no means dismayed. On the contrary, she said that she welcomed the ceremony because it would attract so great a crowd that her "servants" would secure a good harvest. The affair came off, but the

"penance" was softened by the fact that Moll was drunk throughout, having fortified herself with three quarts of sack before leaving her house. Official penances are rarely convincing experiences.

This extraordinary woman had certain artistic tendencies. She loved to fill her house with bizarre things. Sometimes, when a silver cup or curiously decorated jewel was brought to her in the ordinary way of "business," she would give the thief his price and retain the article for domestic ornamentation. Perhaps one of her most astonishing likings, when one remembers her ugliness, was a liking for mirrors. The Fleet Street house was filled with them, and Moll saw her manly figure and repulsive features reflected at all angles.

So the years passed. During their passage, she prospered well, and took to soft living. She became enormously fat and bloated. Her ugliness had now reached a point that caused people in the street to cross the road to avoid this evil-looking, evil-smelling female thing, that seemed neither man nor woman, but an embodiment of the most repulsive characteristics of both sexes. And just as in the days of her childhood, her power of grimacing had caused people to say that she was inhabited by a devil, so it was now said of Moll that she had sold herself to Satan—for only the fiend himself could have wrought so ugly a shape—so monstrous a face.

In her later years, she was seized with dropsy and suffered much, but bore her sufferings with stoic patience, saying that she had had a very enjoyable life and that

one must not grumble when bad times came. Almost to the end of her long life she plied her trade of receiver of stolen property, and amassed huge sums, but at her death, only £100 remained. It is possible that she was robbed—or perhaps she may have speculated rashly. She died of dropsy at the age of seventy-three, and was buried near her home in a City churchyard.

Her last wish was characteristic of her eccentric life. For she said that she desired to be buried face downwards, so that she who throughout existence had defied conventions of life, might defy also the conventions of the grave.

An epitaph attributed to John Milton was placed on the tombstone. Here are some extracts :

“ Here lies under this same marble—
 “ Dust for Time’s last sieve to garble—
 “ Dust to perplex a Sadducee
 “ Whether it rise a He or She,
 “ Or two in one, a single pair,
 “ Nature’s sport and now her care.
 “ For here she’ll clothe it at Last Day
 “ Unless she sigh’s it all away.
 “ Or where she’ll place it, none can tell,
 “ Some middle place twixt Heaven and Hell.
 “ Reader, here she lies till then,
 “ When truly ye shall see her again ! ”

That the author of *Paradise Lost* should have written an epitaph for a thief will seem incongruous to the modern reader, but no such incongruity would have been present in the brain of Milton. The attitude even of the most cultured persons towards crime in past centuries was

an attitude not so much of horror as of resentment. It was the inconvenience of the business rather than its immorality that irritated the honest citizen. The person causing the inconvenience having been decently hanged or burned, there was no reason why the gentlest poet should not celebrate his deeds.

Moll was certainly an unique creature. She stirred by her singularity the imagination of the literary folk of her time, and many legends were invented around her life. Soon after her death there was published anonymously a volume called *The Life and Death of Mrs. M.*, wherein her adventures are set down with great gusto, if not always with accuracy. In the *Stationers' Hall Register* for the year 1610, there is entered a book called *The Madde Pranks of Merry Moll of the Barbican, With Her Walks in Man's Apparel*. The volume, however, was never published. At that time Moll had already gained a reputation of a sort, although she was hardly twenty-one. Perhaps, however, her most distinguished appearance in literature was made when the poet Dekker collaborated with Middleton to write the play *The Roaring Girl*. In this play, the poets show much sympathy with Moll and present her as an entirely amusing and even attractive personage.

Audiences have to be amused, and we can well imagine that Dekker and Middleton knew their business. But when Mary Frith is stripped of her eccentricities, she is no figure for good-natured laughter. She was one of Nature's bad bargains. A cynicism devilish in its

intensity seized her when she was yet a child, and forced her to crime. She revenged herself on society for the ugliness that shut her off from love, and in the very act of a vengeance, sustained throughout a lifetime, found a grim solace and reward.

WILLIAM NEVISON

A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY HIGHWAYMAN AND DESPERADO
WHO WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE DIED OF PLAGUE,
AND LATER REAPPEARED AS HIS OWN GHOST AND
PREYED UPON TRAVELLERS

A SENSE of humour, although greatly over-rated as a factor of success, proved of excellent service to William Nevison, one of the most subtle and remarkable rogues of a period that produced many extraordinary thieves. For it was undoubtedly his sense of the comic that caused him in the later years of his adventurous life to pose as his own phantom and to use the imposition to terrify his victims in such manner that the weapons of his trade were rarely brought into practical employment. If a man can overcome his prey by fear of the supernatural, the pistol and the knife become mere mechanical toys.

Nevison, born in Yorkshire in 1639, the son of prosperous people, was what is called a "bad egg" almost from the beginning. Long before he was fifteen, he had begun to practise debauchery, picking and stealing whenever an easy chance came his way. The climax of his childish exploits arrived when he stole a silver spoon from a closet in his father's house. For this trick, he was severely punished by his schoolmaster. Nevison, to revenge himself upon the master, broke into his stable one night, stole a valuable horse, and then having robbed his father of £10, set out for London in search of adventure. With great cunning he reflected that if he arrived in London on the horse's back, the

animal might attract attention and lead to awkward enquiries. And so, we find this child of sixteen cutting the horse's throat in a lonely road a few miles from the city.

In London, he gained employment in a brewery, and remained there for two years, making several attempts to rob his employer. But no good opportunity arrived until there came the day when he ascertained that a sum of £200 was in the counting-house and that the place, owing to some carelessness, had been left unlocked. He entered the building, took the money, and decamped to Holland. In Holland, he had a love-affair with a young woman, a kindred spirit, perhaps, for she herself was in exile, after having robbed her father of money and jewellery. It is conceivable that his passion for this girl rendered Nevison careless, for, suddenly, he was arrested in Holland for robbery and sent to prison.

Fighting was going on in Flanders. With loot in his imagination, Nevison promptly joined the Army, and showed himself to be an excellent soldier. Presently he tired of soldiering—deserted—came back to England with the deliberate intention of taking to the road. To that end, he presently bought a horse and the necessary weapons.

Throughout his career, Nevison made a strict rule to the effect that he would take no man into his confidence—that he would have no companions in crime. A less picturesque ruffian of a later age—Charles Peace—followed a like course, and to that course invariably attributed his long freedom from capture. “A man has

more to fear from his own friends than from the police," Peace frequently said, and there was, no doubt, sound sense in the aphorism.

The first feat of William Nevison on the King's highway savoured of altruism, for he actually gave away a portion of his plunder. He met upon the road two innocent-looking countrymen who not knowing his trade, complained to him that a brace of highwaymen had robbed them of the sum of £40. Seeing that Nevison was armed, they begged him to aid them to recover the money. Nevison, his sense of humour at once tickled by the suggestion that a robber should redeem wrongs inflicted by other robbers, promised to help them. He rode back with the countrymen, and presently encountered the highwaymen. Approaching them, he drew rein and said—"By your garb and the colour of those horses of yours, you should be the fellows whom I seek. If so, I must tell you that you have borrowed of two friends of mine a sum of £40, which they desire me to demand of you and which you must at once restore." On the highwaymen suggesting that he was mad, Nevison replied: "Mad, say you? Yes, so mad that your lives shall answer me unless you give me satisfaction!" He then caught the rein of the nearest horse and covered the highwayman with his huge pistol. The latter's companion fired at Nevison, grazing his shoulder, Nevison immediately replied with a more telling shot, and the men, suddenly dismayed, not only restored the £40 but handed over to Nevison other moneys amounting to £150. They were then allowed to go. Nevison

immediately gave the countrymen their share, and dismissed then with words of warning: "There are many highwaymen in these parts. I advise you to be careful, for not always will you fall in with honest persons like myself." They thanked him profoundly, and Nevison departed, probably with his tongue in his cheek!

He did very well on the road—and from time to time secured good booty. He was an excellent Royalist and boasted that he never robbed those who belonged to the true party. Our modern thieves are perhaps loyalists in theory, but not often do they allow their politics to interfere with their pursuits. One cannot imagine a London burglar refusing to break into the house of Mr. Stanley Baldwin because he holds similar views to the Prime Minister on the question of Protective tariffs.

Like Turpin, Claude Duval, and other thieves whom romance has tried to glorify for the benefit of the kitchen, Nevison was invariably kind to women travellers, robbing them so courteously that more than one of them protested that she had never parted with her jewels with less sorrow. They called him the "civil and obliging robber." But one imagines that all this embroidery of crime was undertaken because the highwaymen were foolish enough to believe that their victims might be important personages, who would plead for them if the moment arrived when their pleadings might be required. They recognized that men could hardly do this, but that women, sentimental and emotional, might be ready to petition authority—perhaps even the King himself, on behalf of a man who had

robbed them with a bow, and dismissed them with a kiss !

Nevison was rarely satisfied with small prizes. Once he held up an old money-lender who was said to be very rich. The usurer, extremely frightened, offered him sixty gold pieces. Nevison took the gold, but decided that he might exploit his wealthy victim to larger ends. Having coolly robbed the coach of a horse, he compelled the usurer to ride in front of him to a certain inn where thieves resorted. Arrived there, he threatened to blow out the brains of the old man unless he drew up and signed a bill on a London banking house for £500. The usurer surrendered. Then, having stunned the victim and tied him up, the scoundrel swiftly rode to town—cashed the bill, and took to the road again.

In 1661, having secured various good prizes that brought him £450, Nevison began to feel in a sentimental mood, a mood induced perhaps by a sudden desire to enjoy the pleasures of a man of property in the country. We find him back in his father's Yorkshire home, rejoicing the old man with his presence, living (miraculously enough), a life of honesty and decency.

So for a space, this adventurous highwayman was content to shoot nothing but birds and rabbits—was the pride of the village alehouse—a regular worshipper in the parish church. Exceptional in many ways among men of the predatory class, Nevison was certainly exceptional in this Arcadian experience that endured for several years. One may search the pages of the *Newgate Calendar* throughout and discover no example

of a professional thief deliberately enjoying country life and honesty for an extended period.

But when his father died, Nevison became restless. Moreover, his money had been spent, and he had no wish to work. Back to the road he went, with a zest that made him a greater terror than before to all travellers. Not only did he rob and commit many outrages, but he instituted a sort of tax or toll on all drovers and carriers who regularly used the roads which he patrolled. Provided they paid him his demands he allowed them to pass unmolested, and made no attempt to interfere with their cargoes.

Presently he was caught and lodged, heavily ironed, in Leicester Jail. Immediately he sought a way of escape. He was no Jack Sheppard with a genius for prison-breaking; but a subtler scheme soon developed. It was a scheme that Dumas two hundred years later elaborated in *Monte Christo*; a scheme that has been used by a hundred sensational romancers in recent times.

He decided to use his first opportunity to impersonate a corpse! Pestilence was always raging at that time—prisoners died every day in goal. Assuming the symptoms of plague, he asked that a friend of his—a doctor—might be brought to the prison. So keen was the horror of the plague, that the goalers, glad to be relieved of the necessity of tending the highwayman, gladly agreed. The doctor came. With him Nevison arranged a plan. The doctor was to give him a drug that would produce insensibility and the appearance of death. The physician

would then certify that he was dead, and would arrange for certain friends to come to the gaol and take away the body for burial. (This practice of handing over dead prisoners to their friends was a frequent one in those days—when criminal administration alternated between methods of barbarous atrocity and extraordinary indulgences.)

Everything went according to plan. Nevison swallowed the drug, and soon afterwards seemed to die. His face was waxen—his body almost stiff. The goalers, loath to go near a plague-destroyed corpse, willingly allowed the friends to enter the cell and remove the body. Nevison was taken to a house in the town, and after remaining there for some weeks, emerged to pursue his old practices.

* * *

His death had, of course, roused great interest not only in those districts that he had been accustomed to patrol, but in London and other cities. People who had gone forth on journeys in a state of terror, rejoiced to know that they might now journey in peace. There were other highwaymen, of course, but few that had inspired such fear as Nevison. It is difficult perhaps for us in this secure age to realize the feelings of the people, but an approximation of their emotions may perhaps be realised when we consider the panic into which London was thrown about forty years ago by the mysterious comings and goings of a homicidal maniac called "Jack the Ripper." Imagine that elusive criminal caught and caged; imagine the relief that would have followed, and

we can then perhaps form a picture of the feelings of the population of England when William Nevison was said to have died of the plague!

It was whilst this relief was making itself apparent in broadsheets—in rough street ditties—and in other displays, that Nevison conceived the idea of trading on his supposed death by posing as his own ghost. Here was a scheme that delighted his sense of humour, and flattered his sense of power. A grossly superstitious people—he argued—would make no attempt to parley with a phantom. They would stand rigid with fear, whilst the phantom would show itself of sufficiently material instincts to rob and ride away.

The trick worked admirably for a time. Very soon, people began to tell each other that the ghost of the terrible highwayman was now infesting many roads. One traveller had seen the phantom at Hounslow, another at Rochester, and so on. Made bold by believing that he was now immune from detection, Nevison frequently came to London when the road did not offer him enough booty, and broke into rich houses.

He became even more reckless. He robbed and killed, holding life so cheaply that he would frequently shoot and murder when there was no immediate necessity for such crimes. Overweening confidence made a fool of him. Had he played his part more cautiously, relying on the dread of the supernatural—and refraining from murder, he might have heaped up much treasure and have died at last in bed.

But his cumulative crimes reached a point when even

the most foolish—the most credulous—could no longer believe that the many outrages that from time to time were being committed, could be the work of a disembodied spirit. The authorities at the prison in Leicester got to work. They made very searching enquiries into the circumstances of the death from plague of William Nevison. Gaolers sulkily and reticently admitted that they had made no examination of the corpse, but had relied entirely upon the evidence of the physician. Later, they confessed that the doctor was a close friend of the highwayman.

The authorities now came to the very obvious conclusion that Nevison had not really died, and that the supposed phantom was the highwayman himself. Immediately a very large reward was offered for his capture. Nevison believing that he possessed what is called a charmed life, refused to take precautions. He continued to hold up men and women on the highway—making no concession to caution except a frequent changing of his routes.

Two brothers, named Fletcher, both of whom were good riders and very excellent shots, resolved to win the reward offered for the capture. For some time they sought him without success, but at length, having gained a clue from some travellers whom he had robbed, they came upon the highwayman at some distance from York. A terrible fight ensued. Nevison, who was incapable of fear and who valued his own life as cheaply as the lives of others, fought with cool deliberation. He escaped unhurt, after having shot one brother dead.

The whole countryside was now roused against the highwayman. He realized that he was in a very perilous condition. However, keeping his wits with great self-control, he abandoned his horse and having made some changes in his appearance, decided to walk to a village thirteen miles from York. Knowing the district well from his earliest years, he decided that this village, inhabited by simple folk who had nothing to lose and who consequently had no fear of thieves, would afford him harbourage. It is possible that he contemplated disguising his true trade by seeking work as a farm-hand.

But the end of his long pilgrimage to the gallows was now approaching. By some coincidence, fatal to Nevison, it happened that a certain Captain Hardcastle, who knew the highwayman very well by sight, was walking through the village at the moment when Nevison approached. Hardcastle, an impetuous man of quick decisions, anxious to win the reward, did not wait to secure evidence. He took the law into his own hands, arrested Nevison the instant he came up with him, and having pressed villagers into his service, overpowered the highwayman and conveyed him to York, where he was promptly fettered and flung into a cell.

From the moment when Hardcastle came up to him, and said "You are the highwayman we seek, William Nevison," Nevison ceased to hope. He realized that when he stood in the dock, witnesses from half the roads in England would stand up to denounce him. Moreover, there were the gaolers at Leicester prison who

swear that he was the man whom they had allowed to escape, in the guise of a corpse.

It was characteristic of the criminals of a former time that they rarely whined—but took their gruel like stoics. Nevison, when he faced his tribunal, admitted his crimes and asked for no mercy. He was sentenced in company with several others, and a few days after the trial the sentence was carried out. The gallows took a thief who was a callous monster, but who was at least a man of rare talent—a man who has been neglected by romancers, but who nevertheless probably did more to deserve a place in fiction than all the Turpins, Duvals, and Cartouches that have thrilled many generations of ingenuous readers.

* * *

One does not wish to be sentimental regarding a rogue of this colour, but one imagines that the life of the highwayman—the life pursued by Nevison through many years—must have been a lonely business. Contrast it with the snug, warm, hobnobbing life of the town criminal, thief, or cracksman, with its taverns, its dancing-dens, and all the rest of the merry mummeries of Alsatia. Then one sees a dark road—a solitary horseman, and perhaps a sad thought riding beside him through the darkness ; a darkness relieved for one instant by a moon-beam that shines upon—a gibbet !

JONATHAN WILD

AN INFORMER-THIEF AND TRAINER OF THIEVES, WHOM HENRY FIELDING IN HIS SATIRIC BIOGRAPHY, "JONATHAN WILD, THE GREAT," CHOSE AS HIS TYPE OF THE SUPREME CYNIC-CRIMINAL.

IT is frequently the habit of platitudinous magistrates when dealing with a prisoner of the intellectual kind to point out to him that had he chosen honesty instead of dishonesty he might have been a very prosperous person. The magistrates, being poor psychologists in spite of their daily experiences, ignore one essential and illuminating fact. They do not realize that the professional criminal does not hate work as much as he despises it. For the worker, he feels contempt leavened with pity. He sees the builder's labourer on the scaffolding and he murmurs, "Poor fellow!" He sees the clerk bending over his ledger and he thinks, "Poor fool!" And when he is at last in prison and is forced to toil, he pities himself, not because he hates the exertion, but because work seems to him so stupid—so futile a business. That is why the reform of the middle-aged criminal is so hard a task.

Jonathan Wild, grossly cynical, obsessed by a contempt of humanity, would probably have been as miserable as a successful man of an honestly conducted business as he was joyous in his sordid trade of thief catcher and thief informer. To stand and watch the procession of honest men and to realize that he himself was bound by no convention—chained by no moral fetter—gave him gladness. An irresponsible rogue—a

monster of deceit and cruelty—he went his way without a sigh until the end.

To Wolverhampton was given the distinction of his birth on a date in 1682. His father, a wig-maker, apprenticed him to a buckle-maker, but Jonathan soon tired of buckle-making. Having married and had a son, he deserted his wife and child after a few months, and went to London, realizing that a small Staffordshire town was not likely to afford him scope for his talents. For, there is no doubt that he had deliberately resolved to live by his wits—to exploit everybody.

His first chance came *en route* to London. He possessed the uncanny trick of being able to dislocate temporarily anyone of his limbs, and he played this trick to gain the sympathy and acquaintance of a young woman nurse whom he had met in the coach. The girl took him with her to Warwick, where she lodged him at her inn, and having tended the supposed dislocated limb, fell in love with Jonathan and lived with him as his wife. This was hurried work, but throughout his career, Jonathan invariably brought matters to a head with the least possible delay.

His first swindle was in connection with an ointment for the cure of dislocated limbs. He took the girl into his confidence, explained the trick that he had played upon her, and rejoiced to see that she was amused and not vexed. Together they produced a specious ointment, and then advertised an exhibition. The hall was crowded. Jonathan, having carefully dislocated another limb,

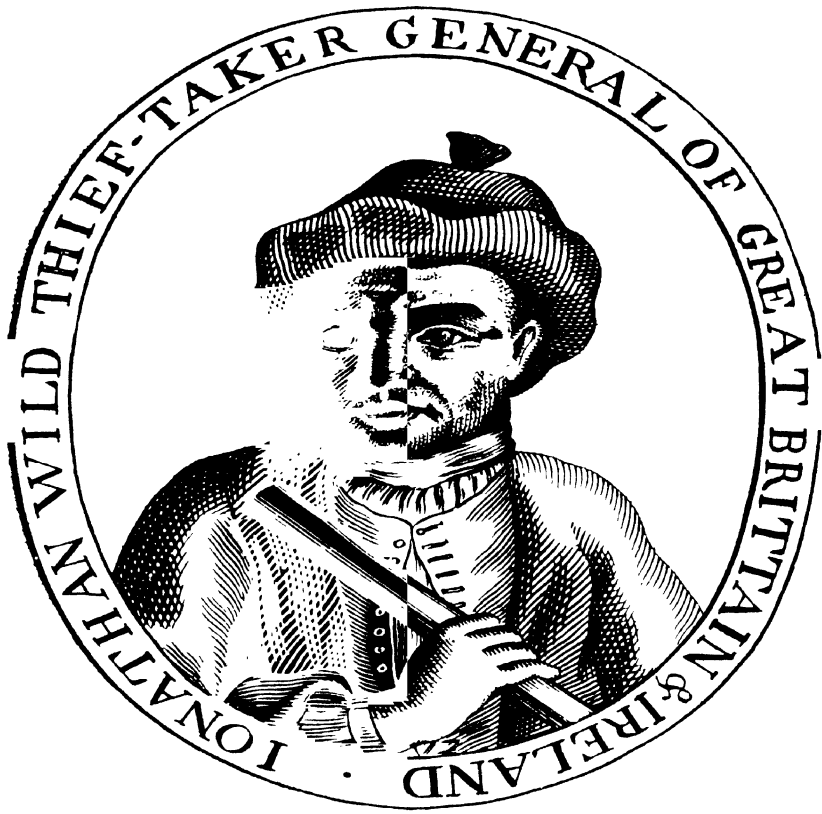
applied the ointment, and instantly the leg was set right. The innocent yokels were hugely impressed, and during the next few weeks, Jonathan and his mistress earned a considerable sum.

But this, of course, was merely the prelude to adventure. Soon after this episode we find him in London, and we hear nothing further concerning his girl-accomplice. He appears to have made some faint attempt to carry on his buckle-making work in town, but that it was not successful is proved by the fact that presently he was in prison for debt.

That sojourn, which endured for four years, probably deepened his tendency towards crime. He made many friends in the prison, among them a Mary Milliner, a clever pickpocket. She fell in love with Jonathan and lived with him in the goal, after the accommodating custom of those days.

The interesting pair were released almost simultaneously. The question arose—what were they to do for a living? Jonathan solved the problem by arranging to rent a house to be carried on as a sort of gambling-place and “*maison de tolerance*.” The girl was to provide the feminine garrison; Jonathan would go out into the highways and the byways and bring home suitable clients.

The thing worked successfully. Together, Wild and Mary amassed a large sum. This money was invested in a tavern in the City near Cripplegate, and presently they moved to the inn and settled down there to entertain half the thieves, footpads, bullies, and Alsations of the town.



JONATHAN WILD

Now, it is conceivable that Jonathan, enjoying his ease as a publican, and plied with kisses by Mary and with flatteries by his customers, might have developed into a stout middle-aged Boniface, cheating only when the process gave him no trouble. But it was written that he was to play his part on a larger stage than the stage of that public-house in the Cripplegate. For it chanced that a very important official of the Law, a Mr. Charles Hitchin (formerly a City Marshal but now degraded to the rank of constable for misconduct), was intrigued by the ill-fame of the tavern, and resolved to visit it.

Hitchin came to scold, but remained to admire. A brief talk with Jonathan convinced him that here was a man of talent—a man with whom he might work to their mutual advantage. For Hitchin, a subtle rogue—with a genius for blackmail—recognized in the landlord of this tavern a brother-spirit. They drank together and swore everlasting friendship. “You are the man for me,” hiccuped Hitchin. “And you are the man for me,” replied Jonathan, who invariably remained sober. And thus, in the reeking back-parlour of the stuffy little tavern, with thieves and their paramours roaring drunken songs in the bar outside, there was formed a compact that endured for years—was broken incontinently—that reacted in the last reckoning against Wild and helped to bring him to the scaffold.

And now there began one of the most extraordinary partnerships in crime ever formed—even in an eighteenth-century Alsatia, where thieves and their official

hunters frequently became entangled, so that one could hardly say where the thief ended and the thief-taker began his operations. For Hitchin actually engaged Wild as his formal assistant with duties that contradicted each other. He was to steal and he was to catch thieves—he was to incite to rob and then to blackmail the robbers—he was to be criminal and detective simultaneously.

Thieves, highwaymen, low-tavern proprietors, the keepers of disorderly houses—all of them were to be cajoled or terrorized into yielding up to Wild or to Hitchin information regarding stolen property. To enable him to carry on his work with authority, Jonathan was invested with a certain insignia of office. Hitchin, it must be understood, still made a show of honesty in connection with his work as a constable, and indeed retained the partial confidence of the Authorities. He was thus enabled to terrorize breakers of the law, whilst Jonathan, by reason of his close association with Hitchin, shone with a reflected brilliance.

And now Wild began to revel in that most subtly delightful of sensations, the sensation of a newly gained power. He held himself with better grace—strutted, assumed monstrous airs of superiority. In his lighter moments, Jonathan went out with his superior officer at night and played amorous tricks with women of the town, whom they blackmailed mercilessly after finishing their evening's amusement. In more business-like hours, the precious pair of rogues would hide themselves in a dark doorway near a fashionable tavern. Presently,

a tipsy gallant would roll along, and a couple of footpads would fall upon him. Instantly Jonathan and Hitchin would appear, overpower the thieves, and rob them of the booty. The thieves, in a panic of fear, would not only yield up the property to these supposed officers of the realm, but would on occasions impart valuable information concerning their friends—information which Hitchin and Wild promptly used for the purposes of blackmail.

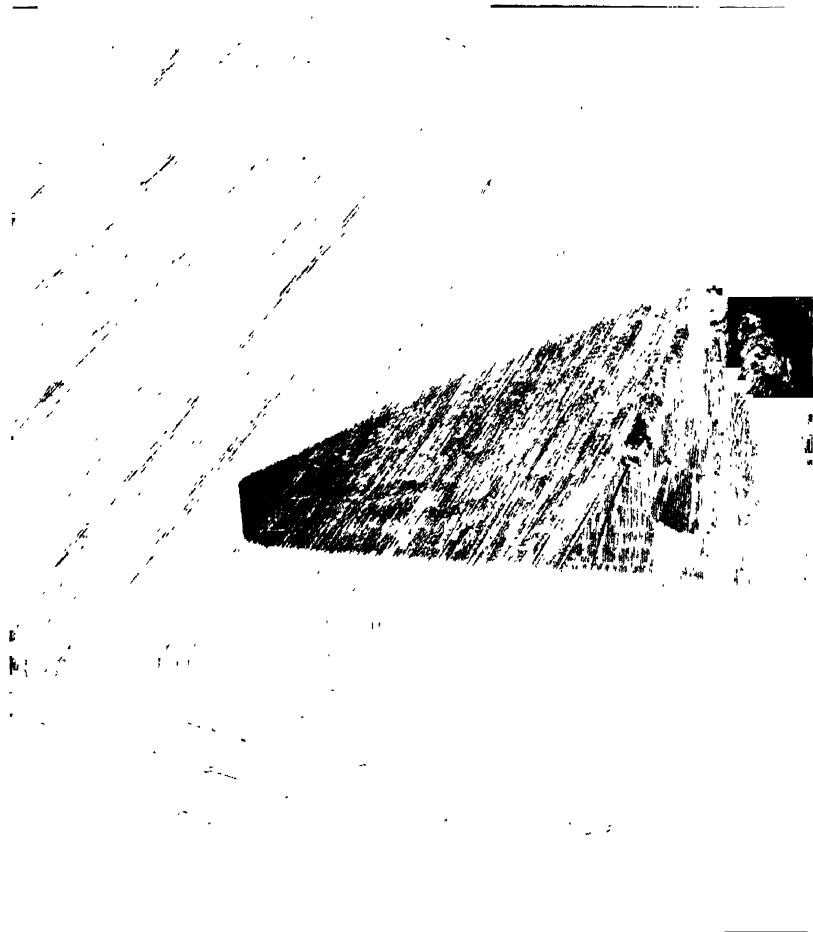
However, when a large crowd of queer persons began to come to his tavern in the Cripplegate, Jonathan told himself that it might be more to his financial advantage if he acted as a disposer and seller of stolen goods than as a mere blackmailer. Thieves are rarely rich people—and bleed them as one may, one cannot extract much from their purses. But in the selling of valuable booty Jonathan saw an excellent opportunity. Very soon the squalid tavern became a sort of thieves' clearing-house. Jonathan would take a footpad or highwayman aside into his parlour, at the back of the inn, and having named a very low price, would presently dispose of the jewel or plate at ten times the amount. If the thief haggled, Jonathan would point to a pair of handcuffs which with grotesque humour he frequently carried on his person. That argument rarely failed to prove convincing.

It may be wondered how it happened that for a comparatively long time this monstrous villain was able to carry on his double dealings without coming to grief through betrayal. The explanation lies in the fact

that Wild undoubtedly possessed a magnetic, genial personality that gained him not only the confidence of the thieves, but their affection as well. He belonged to the order of men who on the outside are "Hail fellow, well met"—exactly as Iago was bluff, genial, frank; but this assumption of good fellowship is the mask of subtle cunning and cruelty. Aided by his outward good humour, Wild speedily amassed a considerable fortune.

When the organized blackmailing ceased, and Wild turned his attention to the merchandise of stolen goods, he found that he could carry on his business without the assistance of Hitchin. Gradually the friendship lapsed Hitchin, enraged by this falling-off, and honestly regretting the loss of Wild's companionship, now conceived for his former ally a jealous and very bitter hatred. It goaded him to see the man whom he had first known as a very humble trader in crime rising to heights of influence and wealth to which he himself had never even looked.

Moreover, it disgusted him to perceive that Wild was in excellent odour with the Law—with judges and magistrates. For the subtle scoundrel in order to maintain his authority would sometimes (when it served his turn) bring to justice some unimportant footpad or highwayman. Then the magistrate would compliment "Honest Mr. Wild" on his capture, and Wild, assuming the expression of a man conscious of virtue, would leave the Court with a good solatium in his pocket. It was said of him that he was so consummate an actor that he



JONATHAN WILD DISCOVERS DARRELL IN THE LOFT

almost believed in himself whilst he was assuming these honest tendencies. His apparent zeal in denouncing the offender was so tremendous that he was sometimes reproved by the magistrates and judges for excessive rigour!

When on occasions his clients complained that he had treated them shabbily, Wild would silence their tongues by taking from his pocket a piece of rope. "Here is some hemp that has cured several men of your complaint," he would say with a laugh. "I have a doctor at hand if you compel me to send for him."

Wild was no ordinary "fence," ready to amble through life with moderate profits. Presently, the thought came to him that he might secure larger profits if he abandoned partially the selling of stolen property, and acted, instead, as a go-between in connection with the thives and their victims.

Wild then hit upon a scheme that bore the simplicity of all brilliant enterprises. He resolved that when a robbery had taken place, he would ascertain from the persons concerned the identity of the individual robbed. He would then approach that person, and posing as a sympathetic onlooker, who by a stroke of luck had become possessed of certain information, would promise that the property should be restored within a week or a couple of days, if the owner would buy it back at a fair price!

Invariably he told the same plausible story. He was a respectable tavern-keeper—but even the most

ensorious landlord could hardly choose his guests. It had happened that whilst serving liquors he had overheard details of the robbery—had immediately enquired into the business and had threatened the criminals with the Law. But they had shown no fear of justice—Wild explained—and had laughed in his face. Then, it had occurred to him that if he compromised matters, the owner might have his property restored. He had therefore promised the thieves that he would interview the owner, and endeavour to make terms.

Now it is possible that the victims to whom he told this specious tale did not believe a word of it, but realized that acquiescence in his rascally proposal would put them in possession of their property at a comparatively moderate outlay, whereas if they appealed to the Law, they would perhaps never look upon their cherished goods again.

Again and again, this trick triumphed. Hundreds of pounds were paid to Wild, who gave the thieves only the smallest percentage of his profits. Wild went his way with great satisfaction, priding himself on the extraordinary success of his inspiration.

The drawback, however, to successful inventions is the drawback of copyists. Very soon, imitators came into the field. Receivers of stolen property in all districts of London told themselves that they had been fools to be content with trivial gains when Wild's method would bring them swift and safe returns. So active did these "fences" become, so apparent were their machinations, that Parliament, after long centuries of

indifference to the tricks of the fraternity, suddenly passed a Bill, making the traffic in stolen goods a capital crime. Incredible as the statement will seem to modern readers, until that time the traffic had been regarded as a comparatively legitimate affair! The thief, if convicted, was hanged—the receiver went free.

The passing of this Act, so disastrous to their trade, fell upon the receivers with terrible force. Immediately they began to cover their tracks—to resort to many devices to hide their trade. But Wild, with the coolness and assurance of genius, was in no way discouraged—in no way alarmed.

Since his installation as a sort of informal broker between thief and victim, he had received stolen goods only at long intervals. In view of the new Act, he resolved to abandon entirely the “receiving” branch of his business and to concentrate on the “restoration” section. He now proceeded to inaugurate arrangements with hundreds of thieves. Every robbery of importance was to be reported to him—the stolen goods were to be carefully hidden in certain specified places. Great care was to be taken to damage nothing, nor must a single article be missing. By this ingenious manœuvre, Wild was able to evade the technical label of “receiver of stolen goods.” He *received nothing*—he had merely ascertained the whereabouts of certain goods and was *ready to reveal the whereabouts* at a price.

In addition to this remunerative trade, Wild now carried on a school for the training of young thieves. Boys wandering in the streets—homeless youths turned

out of their homes in the country for some trifling lapse and finding their way to London—were soon guided by Jonathan and his assistants into ways of crime. The art of picking pockets was expounded as “Fagin” at a later time in the pages of *Oliver Twist*, expounded it to the unhappy “Oliver.” Burglaries were scientifically rehearsed. Even the art of cajoling maidservants in houses was taught by this versatile villain. He was never happier than when engaged in demoralizing the young men and women who became his pupils.

His fame grew. It rushed past the limits of London and spread to many far-off towns and villages. Rich men living in Yorkshire or Lancashire came to consult him when their houses were rifled or their wives robbed in the streets. At length he came to be regarded as a sort of informal Bureau of Information in regard to missing property, whether stolen or merely lost by accident.

Wild now took his work with such seriousness that he actually opened an office in the City in order to deal with the numerous clients who daily wished to consult him. Wearing good, well-cut clothing, and bearing the air of a respectable lawyer or doctor, he would receive fat aldermen, women of fashion, country squires, even justices of the peace! All of them came to him with anxious faces, and it must be said to his credit that they quitted his “office” looking far happier than when they had entered it. Very rarely did he fail to put them in possession of their property.



George Cruikshank

JONATHAN WILD THROWING SIR ROWLAND TRENCHARD DOWN THE WELL-HOLE

However, there is a slump in crime as in other departments of life. It happened on occasions that Wild's offices were half empty by reason of the thieves being less active. But he was not the man to accept a slump of the kind with Oriental resignation. Whenever there was a slackness in his "business" Jonathan promptly stimulated matters by a general order to this thieves' organization to contrive new adventures. Let them show the smallest laziness, he told them, and very soon they would be swinging from Tyburn gallows. This threat worked well, and robberies broke out in all parts of the country once again.

Wild made a great point of encouraging his regiment of thieves to steal only from those persons whose exchequers would enable them to buy back their property at adequate rates. Moreover, he impressed upon them the frequent value of apparently valueless articles. A desk might seem old and useless from a money standpoint, but opened, it might hold documents that would yield a good blackmailing harvest. "Remember," he would say to some promising young thief, "that a man's secrets are frequently more precious to him than wife, gold, or existence itself. Steal the secrets, and you may live upon them in plenty for years!"

Criminals are usually immoral in the narrow sense. Wild was grossly vicious. He rarely was content with one woman for any length of time, and although he was married polygamously no less than four times, he had many informal affairs in addition. After living for some years with the Mary Milliner of whom we have

spoken, he dismissed her with a small pension, in favour of a young woman of the town, a Mary Read. Wild treated the various women with coarse good nature, and was much loved by all of them.

One imagines that by this time, Wild had become dominated by a sense of his importance, and that he carried on his trade with at least as much vanity as avarice. Money was never so much his objective as power. It delighted him to realize that not only were the thieves at his mercy, but that the property-owners had also to lick his shoes. For Wild exacted not only payments but deference from all his clients.

Whatever the crimes of Wild, he owned no small weaknesses. He never drank too much—he was never lazy. On the contrary, he was enormously energetic, ambitious. After a time, it seemed to him that a man of his genius should extend his operations beyond the narrow London limits. To that end, he actually opened two country branches for traffic in stolen goods. One branch covered the Northern, the other the Western road. Each branch had its “local superintendent.” Abe Mendez, an experienced “fence” took charge of the Northern branch, the ruffianly Quilt Arnold of the Western section. The chief duties of these officials were to spy out the land, to watch for the chances of good hauls, and above all to discipline and to strike fear into the hearts of the long procession of footpads, pickpockets, and bullies, who used those roads for their expeditions against honest people. It was also their duty to steal

letters—secure precious secrets—and whenever possible to enable Jonathan to execute a good blackmailing coup.

To modern readers accustomed to hard-and-fast divisions between the officers of the law and the breakers of the law, it will seem an almost incredible thing that throughout this period Jonathan was actually maintaining a certain hazy position as a member of the force responsible for law and order. One cannot define his status with any precision. One might suggest that he combined the duty of *agent-provocateur* (always a dirty trade), with the equally dirty duty of an informer. The authorities doubtless knew quite well the true character of their ally and secret-service agent, but they balanced the facts. “Here,” they probably told themselves, “is a monstrous rogue who himself helps to bring about a number of the crimes that he exposes. But if, by his agency, we are able to detect a large quantity of people and swiftly hang them, why then, we must shut our eyes to his own villainies.” A specious view from the moral standpoint, of course, but criminal administration, two hundred years ago, was a very vague and inconsistent business.

Jonathan, whilst maintaining his legal status by frequent betrayals of his associates, was acute enough to hand to justice only those small offenders who were not capable of enriching his exchequer to any large extent. Moreover, he would at times, at race meetings or other public festivals, arrest with his own hands petty offenders, making a great flourish of his insignia of office.

His zeal and talent in thus marking down law-breakers was often praised by the newspapers and by justices of the peace.

There came at length the day when this instigator and abettor of thieves actually took to himself the grandiloquent title of "Thief-Taker General." (After his death, crude medallions bearing those words, were hastily produced and sold throughout the town.) He now strutted his way, magnificently dressed, too proud to acknowledge the greetings of acquaintances whom he had known before his days of greatness.

Moreover, his character had now degenerated to a point when cruelty formed its essential feature. He would revel in the joy of passing a festive evening, drinking and fraternizing with some doomed wretch, whom on the morrow he would hand over to the hangman. He would tell with gusto stories of men whom had delivered to justice, and at the end of the story, would fondle the arm of his companion, saying, "But *you*, brother, shall never be thus maltreated." Then the miserable dupe would go home, rejoicing in his friendship with so great a man. A few hours later, he would be torn from his bed to endure a swift trial, the damning evidence of Wild, and death a day or two afterwards.

On the other hand, when it happened that by some mischance a member of the gang who was highly useful to Wild fell into the hands of the law, Wild would put forth extraordinary efforts to bring about the man's acquittal. His energy was colossal. He would lie in

wait for witnesses, and by threats or bribes (or both), suborn their evidence. He would fill his pockets with gold and go forth to bribe everybody that was bribable, including even certain judges. We have no record that any judge succumbed, but there is undoubtedly a possibility that this happened.

If means of this kind failed, Wild was by no means beaten. He would then seek an interview with the cherished prisoner and impart to him certain damning information concerning other members of the gang who were of less importance than the captive. Thus fortified, the prisoner would presently volunteer to offer the information in exchange for his own acquittal. In many cases, the device succeeded, and one life was spared in order that two or three lives might be taken ! It is only in comparatively recent years that criminal administration has lost its taste for blood !

In order to maintain his regiment of thieves at full strength, Wild would frequently go to obscure taverns and deliberately demoralize country yokels and innocent apprentices.

He was quick to discern a man in trouble—a youth who had lost his place, a man who had been betrayed by a woman. Then, Wild, with the tongue of a practised rhetorician, would sound the glories of the life of crime—its ease, its excitements, its rewards, its heroisms, and its disdain of death. Always he sounded the note that would most entrance the hearer. If he saw one who seemed to love idleness, he would talk of long hours spent in cosy beds whilst other men toiled in the cold.

If he met a youth who spoke glibly of adventure and the sea, Wild would tell him that the highways of England promised better adventure than all the navies of all the oceans. And thus he told his tale, plying each man with the drug which his cunning brain knew was the drug most aptly suited to the patient !

Wild on one occasion murdered a man deliberately. An "apprentice" highwayman—one of his protégés—had fallen away from him, refused to pay tribute. Wild resolved that an example must be made of this renegade, "pour encourager les autres." Disguising himself elaborately, he took a horse and rode into the country, choosing a road where the mutinous highwayman was likely to be met. Luck favoured Wild, and the man fell into his hands. Without attempting to arrest him, Jonathan shot him through the brain. Resolved to turn this private vengeance to good account, he conveyed the corpse to the nearest town, and received congratulations on having got rid the road of a pestiferous rogue !

Wild now suffering from what moderns call a "swelled head," began to excite envy by reason of his absurd displays. He moved into a very elaborate house—dressed himself and his latest "wife" in gorgeous clothes, kept a carriage and several horses, and a household staff that included a liveried footman !

The first serious note of antagonism was struck by his former partner, the notorious Mr. Hitchin. This man, who had never forgiven Jonathan for falling away

from him, now began a campaign of malice and aggressiveness. He actually went to the length of publishing "broadsheets" in which he denounced his late ally as a diabolical crime-doer and instigator. Himself in poor circumstances, he was stung into fury by the prosperity of Wild, and he now set himself to bring about his downfall.

However, the authorities did not at that stage order the arrest of the "Thief-Taker General." They compromised the situation by urging Parliament to cripple his energies by means of further legislation. Some trifling amendments to the Act dealing with the reception of stolen property were duly made, but Wild ignored these enactments and continued to flourish.

And now beginning to believe that he was immune—that his power and prestige were of such dimensions that the law could not assail him—Wild swelled to absurd proportions. Actually he had the impudence to apply for the Freedom of the City of London for services rendered. He was immensely disappointed when this was refused. He spoke bitterly of the "ingratitude of humanity."

Those whom the Gods would destroy, they first drive mad. Sometimes they vary the process and implant in the destined victim an overweening conceit that brings ruin. There is no doubt that if Wild had kept his head—if he had restrained his grandeurs—if he had refrained from offending former allies—all might have been well with him, and he might have died in his bed, as peacefully as the fattest and most honest alderman of London.

But, obsessed by his own importance, and resenting the smallest affront, he now quarrelled with his oldest friends. One of them, the notorious "Blueskin"—Joseph Blake—fell into bad odour with Wild for refusing to deliver up to him a large share of certain stolen goods. Immediately Wild turned his back on his firmest ally, and denounced him to the justices. The indictment that brought "Blueskin" to the Old Bailey covered also his accomplice "Jack Sheppard," celebrated with Wild and Blake by Harrison Ainsworth in his memorable story. "Blueskin," as great a scoundrel as Wild, but certainly a more decent fellow—fell upon the informer when the latter came to visit him at Newgate and cut his throat. Wild, with the healthy constitution of the born criminal, soon recovered and was convalescent in good time to give evidence against his old acquaintance. In the meantime, Sheppard had lived up to his reputation and had incontinently escaped from gaol. Blake was found guilty and sentenced to death.

The capture and execution of his former helper and friend should have warned Wild that his own Nemesis might be at hand. But, reckless and egotistical still, believing in the unfailing guardianship of his lucky star, he fell back upon many of his old crimes, and trafficked more or less openly in stolen goods.

The actual episodes that led to his arrest have, of course, been set down by many chroniclers, but the influence that set the wheels in motion can only be guessed. It is more than possible that the vindictive Hitchin, who had resolved to pay off old grudges, had



John Sheppard

J. Thornhill Esq. delin

1724 Engr. by G. White

G. White fecit

Engr. by T. Boucher in St. Pauls Church Yard. J. Sheppard appears? in the Middle of the White in that Street between of Church & Bromsbury Mark' press 1724

JOHN SHEPPARD (KNOWN AS JACK SHEPPARD) 1702-1724

a hand in this business. In addition, there may have been others who, following Wild's example, turned treacherously upon him and denounced him for having received from them stolen property. His long career of monstrous villainy and deceit was checked on February 15th, 1725, when he was arrested and taken to goal under a strong escort.

Wild was by no means dismayed. The characteristic optimism of the criminal—his faith in the kindness of the unforeseen—invariably leads the professional law-breaker to believe that some fortunate fluke will come to his aid. Wild, cool, cynical, light-hearted, told himself that he was far too valuable a person to be imprisoned or hanged. The authorities simply could not do without him. . . .

But he was wrong, quite wrong. A grave indictment was prepared. The principal charges were :

That he had been an associate of robbers and had himself formed organizations for the purpose of crime.

That he had received stolen property knowing it to be stolen.

That he had aided and abetted coiners.

That he had suborned witnesses.

That he had stolen a large quantity of valuable lace from the house of a Mrs. Stetham on January 22nd, 1725 ; and had illegally received from her the sum of ten guineas for its restoration.

On the 15th of May, the last act (but one) in the picturesque drama of Jonathan Wild began, in the sordid court of the Old Bailey. (Those people who

know only the modern court with its grandeurs can form small notion of the narrowness, the gloom, and the cattle-pen atmosphere of the Old Bailey of two centuries ago.)

It was decided that only the last two indictments (relating to Mrs. Stetham's property) should be dealt with. They were sufficient to hang the prisoner, and in cases of the kind, the authorities are sensible enough to refrain from confusing and wearying the juries with needless and numerous indictments.

The case had been very carefully prepared by the Counsel for the Crown, and witness after witness went into the box, each telling a damning story. Two convicts were brought in chains from their prison to give evidence against him, their freedom having been promised them in exchange for their services. These men, Kelley and Murphy, swore that they had stolen the lace on the implicit instructions of the prisoner. The woman Stetham then went into the box and recorded Wild's offer concerning the restoration of the property.

That was sufficient. After a few more witnesses had said their say, their evidence being purely formal, the jury pronounced its verdict. Wild was acquitted on the first indictment (the actual stealing of the lace), but was convicted on the second. The Judge then read him a short homily, and sentenced him to die within ten days from that date.

Even now, he was not entirely discouraged. He fancied that many people whose property he had restored

would befriend him—would petition for his release. But this optimism was not justified, and after a few days of suspense and hope, he turned his thoughts towards resignation.

And now behold Jonathan Wild in his last hours—a theologian, a philosopher, and a stoic. He showed no fear—he did not whine or complain. He said that he had a very pleasant life and that it would have been even pleasanter had he been allowed to die in bed. But as that was not permitted him, he would endeavour to show a brave face at the end.

These words were perhaps spoken to disarm the vigilance of his guards, for it is clear that immediately after he abandoned hope, he contemplated suicide. On the eve of execution, he spoke for a long time with the chaplain, praising the behaviour of certain Roman heroes who had died on their own swords. He then went on to speak of classic times and revealed (the chaplain said) a remarkable and deep knowledge. He regretted that he had given so much time to money-getting and had neglected the joys of books.

The chaplain said good-night to Wild, believing that his suicidal theories were purely academic. But early in the morning, Wild took a huge dose of laudanum, that would certainly have killed him had he not fallen into the common error of taking too much. In the result, he was merely sick, and the gallows awaited him a few hours later.

Then his resolution died. He crumpled, became a figure of despair and terror—and had to be carried to the

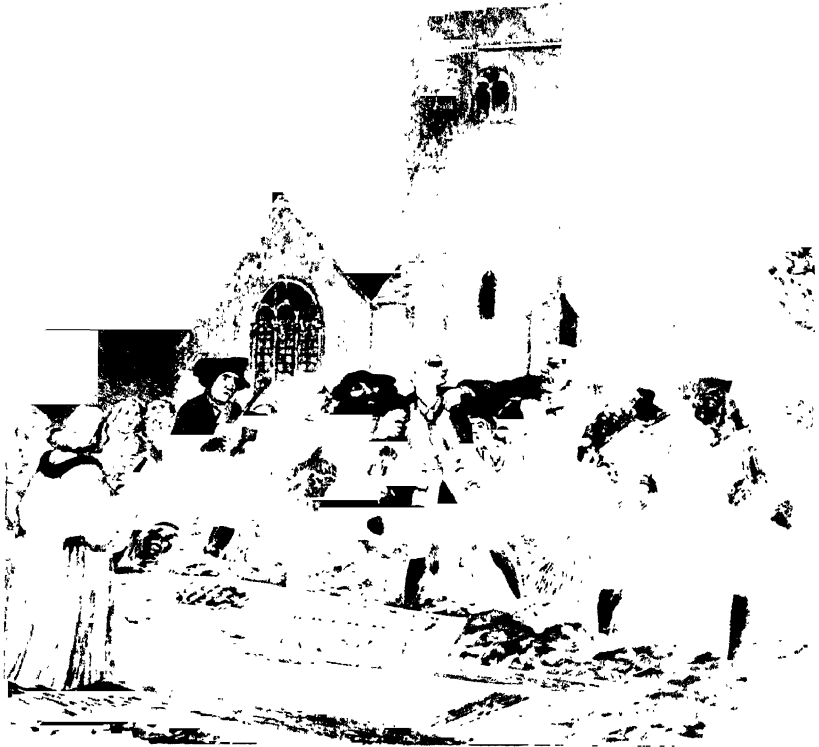
cart that was to take him to Tyburn. When he arrived there, he begged the hangman to delay the execution, and this being done, he sat for a long time meditating in silence. At length the executioner, urged on by the impatient yells of the crowd, slipped the noose round the informer's neck. The cart was jerked away, and Wild went out on the journey whereon he had sent so many hundreds of men! The body hung till nightfall. It was then hurriedly buried, being at a later time exhumed by "Resurrection" men and used for anatomical research.

Following the custom of the times, immediately after the execution, broadsheets were sold throughout the town, conveying what were alleged to be the last words of the condemned prisoner. Here is a copy of certain extracts from the sheet published in connection with Wild :

THE LAST SPEECH, CONFESSION, AND DYING WORDS
OF
JONATHAN WILD.

Executed at Tyburn on the 24th May, 1725.

"Brethren I cannot call you, having broken all ties whereby I am entitled to any relation with you. . . . The crimes I have committed have been manifold and enormous, but the station which I enjoyed did, in great measure, contribute to them. When I considered the means whereby my robberies were discovered, I with dread perceived that there was an Omnipotent Being from Whom no crime, great or small, could be hid. . . .



George Cruikshank

JONATHAN WILD SEIZING JACK SHEPPARD AT HIS MOTHER'S GRAVE
IN WILLESDEN CHURCHYARD

I endeavoured last night by a strong dose of laudanum to put an end to my life. . . . I now return thanks to my Maker that the very strength of it made it take no effect, and I ask pardon for endeavouring to part with my life which it was not in my power to alienate without command from Him who gave it. . . . As to my religion, there is little occasion to mention it, since I have always thought every religion the offspring of the brain of some politician. . . .

“ If I merit no pity from you as men, I yet desire your prayers as you are Christians. I die in the full persuasion that there is an Eternal Being and that Jesus Christ died for our sins, of Whom I now humbly ask forgiveness and to Whom I recommend my soul.”

How these things came to be written we can moderately well imagine. Some hard-up Grub Street scribe probably exchanged a few words with the condemned prisoners, and then elaborated the words into a sentimental and ornate speech. In exactly the same way, in our own times, the crude comments of released prisoners are “ written up ” by ingenious Press gentlemen and “ signed ” by the distinguished criminals concerned !

Wild, however, engaged the attention of more serious scribes. Defoe is said to have visited him in gaol and to have received from him an authentic confession, which the author of *Robinson Crusoe* afterwards embodied in a little volume called *The Life of Jonathan*

Wild. It was published in 1725, a few months after Wild's execution.

To Henry Fielding's satiric novel we have already referred, and in that connection, the following extract from the introduction may present a clue to the keynote of the book :

“When we consider,” writes Fielding, “that it is not a man's grandeur nor his station in the world, but the strange adventures of his life and his art and conduct in the management of things which gives us the curiosity of looking into his history, we need make no apology for collecting these materials and offering them to the public, for here they will meet with a system of politics unknown to Machiavelli—they will see deeper stratagems and plots formed by a fellow without learning and education, than are to be met in the conduct of the greatest statesmen . . .”

At the end of the book, the author draws up a set of maxims that guided Wild throughout his career.

1. Never to do more mischief than was needful for his purpose, for mischief was too precious a thing to be wasted.

2. To sacrifice all men with readiness to his own interests.

3. To ferment eternal jealousies among his gangs.

4. That a good name, like money, must sometimes be parted with or risked to bring the owner advantage.

5. That the heart was the proper seat of hatred, and the countenance of love and friendship.

Here is a cynic's creed summarized, and the reference to Machiavelli is admirably justified. For of a certainty the believer in the theory of reincarnation might fancy that the nimble and Mephistophelean spirit of the dead Italian had sought a home in England, and found it in the body of Jonathan Wild !

JOHN GOW

A PIRATE OF THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

PIRACY stripped of the glamour given to that trade by many romancers was probably a dirty business. In the majority of instances it began with murder (in the form of a ship's mutiny), and murder held the high place in its transactions. Kidd, Teach, and Avery, whose names are treasured by schoolboys, were perhaps mere ruffians, who, by reason of a certain mastery of men, were able to win a kind of black fame. The cruelty of those men was very horrible, but it was matched by the devilries of a person whose name whilst less notorious in criminal history, deserves a place in a category of human monsters. For John Gow was probably the most bloodthirsty and deliberately murderous of all the pirates.

Born (probably) about the beginning of 1700 or a little earlier, he was a good seaman, and eventually became second mate of the *George*, a galley commanded by Captain Oliver Ferneau. On a certain voyage from Amsterdam to Santa Cruz, Gow perceived that the ship carried an exceptionally evil gang of men. They seemed to him the very persons fit for treasons and mutinies. The leading luminaries in this dark galley were seamen named McCauly, Melvin, Williams (this one, an especially horrible brute), and two Swedes called respectively Winter and Petersen.

Mutinies were easy to bring about in the bad old days of long voyages, disgusting food, crowded fo'c'sles, and poor pay. Skippers developed a discipline suitable

to the occasions, and the rope's end formed a very active part of the daily routine. Even to-day in certain ships, a good qualification for a first mate is a leg-of-mutton fist. In the days of sail, it probably counted for more than good navigation and general seamanship.

Now, given these conditions—brutal hardships on the one hand, and brute force on the other—one may realize that conditions were frequently favourable for an outbreak of mutiny. The *George* was no worse than other vessels. Ferneau was the average skipper, neither liked nor disliked by the men.

Gow had seen in him from the first a man who was of weak fibre—and there is no doubt that from the day he stepped aboard the *George* he had resolved to make himself master of the vessel and prey on other vessels. Indeed, on several previous voyages he had attempted a *coup* of this kind, but it had invariably failed.

Luck favoured him. Food was bad—the weather was savage. The men in a state of misery and rebellion sent a deputation to the skipper, asking for better provisions. Ferneau temporized—throwing the blame on his owners after the custom of all skippers—and dismissed the deputation with small comfort.

Immediately, a number of the more adventurous and brutal seamen came together for the purposes of planning mutiny. Williams and Gow were the dominating brains. The others, whom we have named already, McCauly, Melvin, Petersen, and Winter, supported these protagonists.

Deliberately the victims were chosen. The captain,

the first mate, the supercargo, and the surgeon, were to be slaughtered. It was believed that when those authorities were dead, the bulk of the crew who thus far had not joined the conspiracy to mutiny, would be prevailed upon to accept the new conditions or be terrified into submission.

Everything went according to plan. On a certain evening, after the skipper (following his custom) had read prayers at eight o'clock, the final details were arranged.

Between nine and ten that same evening, the chief mutineers headed by John Gow, came to the hammocks of the men whom they had already chosen for the crime, and roused them with the signal—"Who fires first?" "At which," says the ancient chronicler, "they all got out of their hammocks . . . and going in the dark to the hammocks of the first mate, surgeon, and the supercargo, cut their throats, and fired bullets into them."

Immediately afterwards, they went to the quarter-deck and flung themselves on the skipper. Winter and two others tried to throw him overboard. He was very strong, and made so great a resistance that they killed him as they had killed the others. He was then flung into the sea.

John Gow was now automatically captain of the ship, the second mate, of course, taking command in the absence of skipper and first officer. But we may gather from what we know of his dominating character that he would have wrenched this authority from any person who had been entitled to the command.

After the killing, the men concerned solemnly assembled on the quarter-deck, shook hands, and engaged to hold together for the purposes of piracy. Williams was appointed lieutenant to Gow. The seamen who had taken no part in the affair were then summoned. They were told that they would be unharmed if they obeyed orders, and that in the event of capture, they would be exonerated from complicity in the mutiny on the grounds that they had merely acquiesced to save their own lives. The remainder of the night and the early morning was spent in rifling the chests of the victims and in a debauch.

The next step of Gow was to paint out the name of the vessel and to substitute the name of the *Revenge*. (Perhaps Gow, who was a student of history, may have recalled Sir Richard Grenville's famous fight against the Armada in his vessel of that name.) The ship's artillery of eighteen guns was then mounted, and all was ready for the ensuing acts of piracy. The *Revenge* sailed for the coasts of Spain and Portugal, where rich prizes were anticipated.

It must have been a tremendous disappointment to Gow and his friends when after capturing first an English sloop, and afterwards a Scottish vessel, they found merely cargoes of fish. However, they were consoled to an extent by the discovery of clothes, provisions, sails, and ammunition. To avoid any possibility of detection, the pirates murdered the officers and crews and then sunk the vessels. John Gow, saturnine, cynical, abnormally cruel, loved killing for its own sake, and would perhaps have slaughtered the men even had

there been no chance of subsequent peril to himself and his associates.

To Galicia they went afterwards, but on that coast they found nothing. Afterwards the *Revenge* sailed to Madeira, hoping that a good Portuguese prize might heave in sight. Again there was disappointment. They were now desperately short of food and water.

Gow then played a very bold trick. Hoisting the British colours, he anchored off Porto Santo, and sent a boat ashore with presents for the Governor and a letter begging that "Captain Somerville" (himself) might be permitted to land and purchase provisions. The Governor, who liked Englishmen, decided to answer the letter in person. Taking with him some of the principal citizens, he went aboard the *Revenge*, where Gow entertained the party very courteously. However, whilst the feasting was going on, it occurred to the subtle-minded Gow that perhaps the visit was not as innocent as it seemed—that some suspicion might have come to the brain of the Governor—and that the provisions would not be secured after all. Urged on by this sudden misgiving, he decided to hold the party as hostages until the vessel was equipped with all that she needed. He whispered some instructions, and a moment later the gay lunchers were being covered by muskets. Their terror was grotesque. However, the arrival at length of a boat from the shore, carrying a cow, a calf, fowls, water, and other things, ended their suspense. After solemn oaths of secrecy had been forced from them, they were returned in safety to Porto Santo.

Several small prizes were secured off the Spanish coast. But the absence of prizes of value was preying on Gow, making him sullen, enraged. At length he quarrelled with Williams (a brute as savage as himself, but of a lower order of brain), and in the fight that followed, Williams became a raving maniac. He was chained and locked in his cabin.

Gow would have murdered Williams to rid himself of a nuisance who disturbed him by his screams and curses, but he realized that an act of this sort might alienate the confidence of the other men. He therefore hit upon a more diplomatic method of removing the nuisance. Having held up and stripped a Bristol ship, he handed over to the captain all the prisoners that had been spared during the piracies, and at the same time delivered up Williams, with instructions to the skipper to hand over the man to the first British man-of-war that he encountered as a dangerous pirate. To propitiate the captain, Gow gave him a handsome present.

It may be asked why Gow allowed his later captives to return to their vessels whereas he had slaughtered or made prisoners of the earlier captives. It is difficult to answer this question, but it is conceivable that he became bolder—less cautious—as his progress continued. Finding that piracy was an easy business—that thus far he had not even come near to any sort of peril—he became, perhaps, reckless, and took risks that he would hardly have taken at the beginning.

However, after this act of rashness he suddenly developed a new caution. It occurred to him that when

the Bristol vessel reached Lisbon, to which port she was bound, certain British men-of-war might be on the look out for him.

Immediately he called a conference of his chief men, and new coasts were discussed. Eventually Gow proposed (and the suggestion was accepted) that they should sail forthwith for the coast of the North of Scotland. He pointed out that Scotland was his home—that his knowledge of the country would enable them to make remunerative land raids from time to time—and moreover that Government ships were rare in those regions on those coasts.

The month of January, 1725, found them off the Orkney Isles. They anchored under the lee of an islet some distance from the port. Then, a difficulty that Gow had not foreseen came into view. The proximity to Scotland, where many of the crew had their homes, caused a desire on the part of some of those men to escape from their marine prison. Gow had to use all his wits to prevent this flight, but in spite of his various safeguards, one of the men pressed into the service of the mutineers against his desires, contrived to fetch the mainland. A good swimmer, it is possible that he swam ashore in the night.

His first action was to go to Kirkwall and surrender himself to the Governmental authorities as an unwilling pirate. The authorities, fearing that the port might be bombarded by Gow, at once assembled a number of people to defend the place. Meantime, a further desertion had taken place on the *Revenge*. Ten seamen had

seized the longboat, and were arrested on their way to the mainland.

Gow was furious. At this point, he seems for the moment to have lost his head, for he vowed that in spite of the many perils, he would raid the port and plunder the houses. Next day, his head cooler, he resolved to send an expedition to carry out the scheme. but himself remained to guard against further flights. The boatswain with ten trusted men landed at night and raided the house of Mr. Honeyman, Sheriff of the county. Their attempt to steal a huge bag of gold was frustrated by a clever piece of acting on the part of Honeyman's daughter. Having forestalled the pirates in their search for the treasure, she secreted the sack, and feigning hysterical terror, was allowed to pass unmolested. However, the marauders contrived to secure other valuable things, and then capped their expedition by a piece of fooling induced probably by many drinks, for they actually compelled the piper of the Sheriff's household to go before them on their way back to the shore, playing his pipes to celebrate the success of their raid !

Gow was very satisfied with the affair. On the day following the raid, the *Revenge* anchored off Calf Sound. The pirates went ashore at night, but found no available plunder. Enraged by this disappointment, they broke into a cottage and took away with them three young women whom they treated very brutally when they had them at their disposal in the ship. One of the girls died of her injuries. Gow made no attempt to interfere with

the seamen's outrages. Himself a hater of women, he was perhaps not displeased to see their humiliation and torment.

Piracy did not always run a very long course. One reads of these people, and one imagines that their careers extended to all sorts of prolonged periods, but the pirate with a record extending into even ten years, was a very rare personage. In the case of John Gow, the career endured a little more or a little less than a year. The exact dates are not available.

It is possible, however, that Gow's piracies might have continued for several years had not chance brought him to the Island of Eday. Having anchored off the island, he suddenly called to mind that there lived there an old schoolfellow of his, a certain Mr. Fea. It was the attempt to gain the assistance of Fea that eventually brought about the arrest of Gow and his associates aboard the *Revenge*.

The ship being in want of new sails and rigging, Gow wrote to his friend a long plausible letter, posing, of course, as the skipper of a reputable trading ship. Recalling their old friendship, he begged that Fea would send him boats and sails. The letter was taken ashore by the boatswain, in a boat manned by several of the mutineers.

It would require many pages to describe in detail what followed. But, as the description would be tedious, let us say briefly that Fea, a man of rare intuition and talent, suspected piracy the instant he read the letter and looked on the villainous faces of the "postmen."



GOW KILLING THE CAPTAIN

Certain manœuvres on the part of Fea followed, and at the end of them he had gained sufficient evidence to prove that his first theory was right. The men who had landed were surprised and overpowered by a party of armed inhabitants. Gow was then persuaded by an ingenious message sent to him by Fea to come himself to the island. He came there, expecting to find a welcome from his old friend—he found instead a dozen muskets levelled at his breast as he entered the room.

Gow then played a courageous part. Realizing that his short adventure on the seas had ended, he begged them to shoot him immediately, saying that he preferred instant death to the humiliation of capture and execution by the rope. Or was it courage? May not his swiftly working brain—a brain that was worthy of many excellent enterprises—have conceived the idea that Fea, who was once his schoolfellow, might be touched by the appeal and perhaps set him free? Impossible to decide this question, but it is worth a moment's consideration.

If indeed such was his hope, it failed. Fea, a hard-headed Scot, doubtless realized that the capture of the subordinate pirates would be held a trivial thing if the dominant pirate escaped justice. Gow was seized, bound, and placed in safe quarters. Mr. Fea, encouraged by his success, then planned to secure the ship. Taking with him a large number of his men, he went aboard the *Revenge*, and so sudden was his approach, that the mutineers, demoralized by the absence of their captain, surrendered after a brief struggle.

The authorities on the mainland were then summoned.

The pirates were brought by land to Edinburgh, and presently taken aboard the frigate *Greyhound* bound for England. She arrived at Woolwich on the 26th March, 1725. The prisoners, heavily ironed, were then conveyed to the prison of the Marshalsea in South London—a prison celebrated about one hundred and thirty years later by Dickens in the pages of *Little Dorrit*. Here, by a coincidence, John Gow met his old lieutenant, Williams, who was entering the prison almost simultaneously, having been handed over to a warship by the captain of the Bristol ship which the pirates had pillaged.

At Doctors' Commons, a place now associated with people seeking special licences to be married, a preliminary examination of the prisoners was held in order to decide the relative guilt of the pirates, so that those men who were less guilty and who had acted under coercion, might be set aside to give evidence against the leading conspirators.

Whilst awaiting his trial, Gow maintained a bitter and reserved attitude. He had been strongly advised by Fea to make a complete confession so that his sentence might be mitigated, but Gow was sensible enough to realize that this course would avail him nothing, seeing that he was the chief protagonist in the mutiny and in the subsequent piracies.

A few days before the date fixed for the trial, he astonished his jailers by announcing that he would refuse to plead. This refusal to plead guilty or not guilty was held in those times to be a very heinous

offence. In our own day, if a prisoner chose to follow this course, a formal plea of "Not Guilty" is entered, and the proceedings then follow in the usual course. But there was a certain dogged and narrow-minded conscientiousness about criminal administration in former ages. If a man refused to plead, gentle persuasion was tried at the beginning, with torture following if he remained obstinate. The torture for this offence of non-pleading was pressing to the point of death by means of iron weights. It is recorded that one wretched prisoner bore upon his chest weights of 424 lbs. Gow was taken to Newgate, and the weights were shown to him. The sight of the contemplated torture suddenly caused him to waver, and he consented to plead.

The complete company of the *Revenge*, with the exception of certain men who had been proved to be unwilling accomplices, were tried together at the Old Bailey. The chronicler does not tell us what happened to the bulk of the subordinates. It is possible that they escaped with long terms of imprisonment. Sentence of death was passed on John Gow, Williams, Winter, Petersen, and McCauly.

The executions at the notorious Execution Dock were fixed for a date in June. The pirates came to the gallows with great coolness, Gow himself setting them a good example of callous unconcern. Indeed, he sprang from the ladder with such agility and goodwill that the rope actually snapped and he fell to the ground. (Horrible incidents of this kind were by no means infrequent in

the rough-and-tumble hangings of those times.) For a few minutes, the wretched man lay on half-stunned. Then, recovering himself, he actually mounted the ladder unaided, and the rope was placed round his neck for the second time. His body, and the body of Williams, were afterwards hung in chains at Greenwich and Blackheath respectively, for the gentle custom of gibbeting a criminal and leaving him to hang till the flesh dropped from his bones, was not wholly abandoned until one hundred years later. The authorities in their innocence believed that the sight of malefactors swinging into rotteness would warn and deter potential offenders. In the result, it had the opposite effect, for the practice became a jest and commonplace, so that the Law was stripped of authority and majesty. One may pursue a plausible theory to absurd ends.

Piracy, except in rare cases in remote Eastern seas, is dead. It was killed by steam, the electric cable, and perhaps most distinctively by the general concerting of the nations of the world to destroy a peril that was common to them all.

ANNA MARIA ZWANZIGER

A WOMAN POISONER, SOMETIMES CALLED "THE GERMAN BRINVILLIERS," WHO BECAME OBSESSED WITH THE LOVE OF POISONING, AND DESTROYED A NUMBER OF PEOPLE.

POISON, a silent and certain destroyer, has from the beginning of recorded history been a weapon very dear to the killer of his fellow-creatures. In remote ages, poisoners were held in high esteem by kings, prelates, and other powerful personages who desired a facile method of removing inconvenient people. The Cæsars had their Court poisoners. Locusta, a notorious woman poisoner, was in the pay of Nero and received from him a considerable annuity.

Of all forms of dealing death, this form is perhaps the form that has been used most treacherously, because the administration of it, in the majority of cases, is made possible by a certain proximity and friendship. One can hardly poison a person in the street as one may stab or shoot or bludgeon him. . . . There must be a certain degree of accessibility. It is that accessibility which enables husbands who destroy their wives, wives who destroy their husbands, and servants who destroy their masters, to use poison to bring about their ends.

Poison is a favourite form of death-dealing because its effects are sometimes attributed to purely natural causes. The criminal escapes, whereas had he employed knife or bullet, there would have been open evidence of crime. In former days when autopsies were rare,

when many doctors were careless, it is conceivable that hundreds of persons went to the earth, sent there by certificates that bore a record of "natural causes," whereas they had, in reality, been the victims of poisons. To-day, there is, fortunately, more scrutiny, but even in our own times we read of exhumations—of persons buried after a death from apparently natural causes—whose remains when subjected to examination have revealed huge quantities of poisonous drugs. The opponents of cremation find in this fact their strongest plea. They point out with perfect justice that in more than one case where a body has been exhumed and has brought silent evidence against a murderer, that evidence would never have been available had the fire dealt with the victim !

In the case of Anna Maria Zwanziger, perhaps the most notorious woman-poisoner of the nineteenth century, there is little doubt that she would have escaped justice, and have died in the odour of respectability had the bodies of her victims been cremated. Her story is sordid enough, but it is worth the telling, because it goes to show an extraordinary tendency in the criminal temperament—a temperament to begin a life of evil with a view to certain practical ends and to continue it for the mere joy of dealing out death.

A novelist would be a bold man indeed if he set out to write a novel wherein a woman of middle age, ugly, stunted, without attractions of face, figure, speech, deliberately killed certain women so that she might win their husbands. The novelist has to write of feasible

things—he has to be what is called “convincing.” But life does many inartistic things, and in adding two and two, frequently brings out a result of five or six. Life laughs at logic! No logician would have countenanced for a moment the possibility of such a woman as Anna Zwanziger. Obsessed by the stultifying vanity of the criminal, she believed that she had the power to win men and, dominated by that belief, she broke down every obstacle in her road.

She was born about 1760—this misshapen woman whom some people likened to a toad—in the city of Nuremberg, and lived during her youth at her father’s inn. The Zwanzigers appear to have been decent people of the lower middle class—the sort of people who go to church twice on Sundays and consume the other sections of the day with heavy eating and heavy sleeping. Anna had an uneventful childhood. Glad to escape from the monotony of home, she married the first man who came her way—a young lawyer. He was a drunkard and a bully. For years she endured much misery, and when at length the brute died, she would have rejoiced had he left her with some resources. She was without money and without friends.

Having scraped together funds, Anna opened a small confectionery shop. This was a failure, and presently she became housekeeper to a famous political personage. Wearying of this work, she joined a travelling circus as cook. Throughout this period of her life she was intensely gloomy, and more than once tried to kill

herself. She had a great love for gloomy fiction of the romantic type. She read Byron and the *Sorrows of Werther*, crying over the pages.

This sentimentality of the murderer is not a rare thing. Troppman, whose career is recorded in this volume, would cry bitterly at the theatre when he saw pathetic episodes. Mrs. Dyer (a notorious baby-farmer), who killed a number of young children, would shed tears when one of the little creatures fell down and hurt itself. Anna Zwanziger was always a prey to this sentimentality, and at a later stage would often weep with apparent sincerity over the bed of the person whom she had destroyed !

It was at Weimar, where she stayed for some time after travelling through various cities, that Anna committed her first crime—a comparatively trivial affair. She stole a valuable jewel from the house where she was employed, and at once left the place. Taking refuge in the house of a relative, the latter drove her out when he discovered why she was hiding. It is possible that this action taken in conjunction with the brutality of her husband may have induced in the woman a certain hatred of humanity, a hatred that afterwards crystallized into wholesale destruction.

Once again she took to the road, and did many things. She taught needlework in a girls' school ; she cooked for restaurants—she was a nursemaid in tradesmen's houses. Eventually, she settled down in Pegnitz, a small town near Bayreuth, and it was in this town that Anna first turned her thoughts towards murder.

She had suddenly developed an almost insane desire for admiration and for marriage. She was now approaching the age of fifty, and at a time when the average woman is shedding her vanities, Anna was assuming them, after the abnormal fashion of the criminal, who in all things diverges from the normal type.

She longed for men, but she knew that her unshapely figure and her dull, unattractive features, could not compel their interest. It seemed to her that her only chance of gaining a husband would be by means of strategy. She must seek a situation as housekeeper to some wealthy bachelor or widower—and by means of kindness, petting, and the procuring of his comfort, prevail upon him to marry her.

To this end, Anna soon established herself in the house of an important person, a certain Judge Glaser. She believed him to be a widower, and was horrified to discover presently that his wife was living. The Judge and Frau Glaser had quarrelled and had agreed to live apart, but Anna soon ascertained that the quarrel had not been a decisive one and that there was a possibility of a reconciliation. Anna pondered this possibility. In that moment there was born in her brain the first dim thought of murder.

How does that nebulous thought develop, one wonders! It is conceivable that the potential murderer deals with it after his temperament. One man will thrust it aside with horror, and come back to it later, with the horror melting into interest and eventually into desire. Another will trifle with it as a cat trifles

with a mouse—pushing it aside, drawing it back, and at last seizing it and holding it fast. It is possible that Anna Zwanziger, a woman of enormous resolution, did neither of these things, but that having conceived the nebulous scheme, she proceeded to build up the details.

Her first move was to cajole Glaser into taking back his wife. She urged upon him the falsity of the position of the husband who lives apart from his mate. She pointed out, moreover, that scandal might attach to him if he retained her as housekeeper, whilst his wife remained under another roof. She played upon his feelings, even going to the length of exhibiting to him souvenirs of the wife which she had found in her room, hoping that these souvenirs would awaken something of his old affection.

The subtle scheme succeeded. Glaser at length yielded, and Anna, delighted, wrote to Frau Glaser a letter, wherein with much sentimentality and ornate phrasing she explained the situation. The wife came back to her home, and Anna arranged for her a sort of triumphant welcome. The house was made to look like a flower-garden—festoons were hung upon the walls. One would have said that here was a woman of sublime altruism, rejoicing in the reunion of a man and woman whom she had brought together.

Why had she done this? Because she realized that if Frau Glaser was to be destroyed by her, she must have *constant accessibility* to the woman. Within a few days of the return of the wife, Anna set to work to administer

to her arsenic. She placed the poison in tea, coffee, and wine.

Arsenic has always been a favourite poison for two excellent reasons. It is easy to obtain, being sold for many legitimate purposes—and it may easily be mistaken for illness when it begins to assert itself in the body of the potential victim. However, the murderer does not derive undiluted advantages from the use of this metallic irritant, because there is no poison that can be more swiftly and surely detected in the body. Moreover, the processes of the earth and decomposition will not affect its presence. There are cases where arsenic has been found in persons who have been buried for more than fourteen years!

Arsenic can be administered in very small doses, and the poisoning process can be extended over many weeks. On the other hand, it can be given in fairly large doses and bring about death within a few days. In the case of Frau Glaser, this last course was followed by Anna Zwanziger, and the wretched creature died in great agonies at the end of the third day after the first dose had been swallowed.

Anna was now ready to console the husband and to cajole him into marriage. She had imagined that this would be an easy thing—that he would turn to her as a natural solace, seeing that he had come to rely upon her friendship before the reunion with his wife. But a terrible disappointment was at hand. For Glaser showed no signs of friendliness, but became morose and unresponsive. It is possible that he reproached himself

for having caused his wife so much sorrow, and was in no mood to marry again. Anna, at length, perceived that in this house she had nothing to which she might look forward. With the stoic resolution of the criminal she decided to abandon regrets and to seek her fortune elsewhere.

She must marry! She had now forced this resolve into her brain, and had decided that no power on earth should turn it aside. She wanted to make her old age secure—could not contemplate being forced to work for a living.

No suspicion had been roused by the death of Frau Glaser. It had been attributed by the doctor to some internal trouble. Anna, feeling that she was secure from association with the crime, secured another situation as housekeeper. Her second master, like the first, was a legal official, a Judge Grohmann. He was a bachelor, thirty-eight years old, a sufferer from gout. By means of many ministrations to his infirmity, Anna soon gained his confidence and learned that he was engaged to be married. Horrified by the discovery, she set herself to intercepting the letters from his fiancée. She played other tricks to bring about a breakdown of the engagement, but these failed. Enraged by his indifference to herself, she coolly planned his destruction.

Before carrying out this second crime, however, she experimented on two of the servants, giving them small doses of arsenic in their tea. They were seized with violent pains, but did not succumb. Perceiving that no suspicion followed these temporary illnesses, she told

herself that she was immune. In exactly the same way, the Marchioness of Brinvilliers, nearly one hundred and fifty years previously, had experimented with poisons on her servants and on patients at a great Paris hospital.

Grohmann was soon destroyed. Once again, the innocent doctors diagnosed "natural causes," and the second victim was carried to the grave. So assiduously had Anna Zwanziger nursed her master during his last illness that she became a sort of heroine in the little town. People spoke of her as a self-forgetting angel, who was ready to abandon food and sleep to nurse a sick employer. In consequence of the supposed devotion, a colleague of the dead man, a magistrate called Gebhard, desiring a nurse for his wife who was about to have a child, called on Anna, and begged her to accept the office.

Anna was delighted. This was the very opportunity for which she was seeking. Gebhard was comparatively young, a rich man, and good-looking. She had fancied that he had looked at her with more than a mere employer's interest when he had engaged her as nurse. Encouraged by this illusion, she entered the house and proceeded to nurse Frau Gebhard. The nursing was done so effectually that the young woman soon lay a corpse.

During the process of poisoning by arsenic, the victim had more than once developed a suspicion that something sinister was being done to her by the nurse, but the remarks which she made to her husband were waved aside as the delusions of an invalid. It is easy for us who read these things after the event to criticize his

conduct, to say that he ought to have exhibited more zeal in enquiring into the allegations, but let us remember that the dramatic and the sensational so rarely enter into the lives of people that they are slow to detect these developments. They are not prepared for them. Let the reader ask himself what he would say and do if his wife told him one morning that she believed she was being poisoned. He would probably laugh, mutter "indigestion," and return to his newspaper. It is probable that that is exactly what was done by Herr Gebhard.

Three deaths had now been brought about by this woman, but she went her way undisturbed. People pitied her for having been associated with houses where so much mourning had entered. After the murder of her young mistress, she remained in the house of Herr Gebhard as housekeeper to the unhappy man, whom she consoled with her usual glibness.

In addition to superintending the household, she undertook to prepare the meals. It was no culinary interest that urged this action. She had now been seized with an extraordinary obsession—an obsession similar to the dominating passion that caused Madame de Brinvilliers to poison unoffending persons. She availed herself of her rôle as cook to introduce arsenic into many of the dishes. It has been suggested that the woman, embittered by her failures to gain a husband, desired to take wholesale revenge on all with whom she came in contact. That this motive may to some extent have been present there is a possibility, but one imagines

that her chief motive was cruelty, supplemented the enjoyment of a secret power which she chose as she chose.

The poisoner revels in this power. In time, continue sufficiently long at his trade, he comes to look upon himself as a sort of deity, dealing out death, sparing some, destroying others.

To that point had Anna Zwanziger now come. She was beginning to abandon her ambition to gain a husband, and was concentrating on destruction. The servants in the Gebhard household were seized with agonizing pains, and the guests who came to dinner were also attacked. Even the tradespeople bringing articles to the house did not escape her ministrations !

Eventually, Herr Gebhard asked her to go. Not for a moment did the ingenuous man suspect his house-keeper, but he pointed out to her that he could hardly retain a cook who made so many blunders. For, whenever any symptoms of poisoning appeared in guests or servants, Anna was ready with a specious tale. She had used a wrong ingredient in the cooking—it had produced violent indigestion. The lies were invariably accepted without arousing suspicion.

But the end was now approaching. That she was able to continue her operations for so long a time is a problem which must be explained on the lines we have already suggested. People living quiet, uneventful lives are rarely ready to suspect drama ! They read in the papers of tragedy—it does not occur to them that tragedy may enter their own houses.

Enraged by the dismissal, she resolved to take a final revenge. On the eve of her departure, Anna Zwanziger went to the salt-box and impregnated the contents with arsenic. The coffee-tins and the sugar-canisters were also sprinkled with the poison. Not content with this distribution of death, she gave to Gebhard's infant a poisoned sweet, as she kissed the child in farewell. Then, carrying with her testimonials from her employer that stated that she was "a model housekeeper and trusted friend," she set out for Bayreuth.

Soon afterwards, the entire household was seized with illness. The outbreak, occurring within a few hours of her departure, and attacking everybody in the building, seemed a sinister affair, and at last suspicion began to assert itself. Even the stupid and confiding Herr Gebhard was roused to action. The police were sent for. On their arrival with a surgeon, they searched the house and examined the receptacles in the kitchen. The arsenic in the salt-box was soon detected—the sugar-canister revealed the poison. Meantime, emetics had been given to the sufferers, and they soon recovered. (Small doses of arsenic, if speedily detected and eliminated, are only temporarily harmful.)

Bavarian police methods in the early part of the nineteenth century were absurdly slow. The deliberation and almost metaphysical meanderings that are an essential part of the true Teutonic temperament seem to have entered the stolid officers of the Law. For

some weeks no attempt was made to arrest Anna Zwanziger, nor even to exercise a watch over her movements. That she did not escape was due to the fact that in her supreme vanity and self-confidence it did not occur to her for an instant that she would be suspected of murder and attempted murder.

At length, the police decided that it might be advisable to exhume the bodies of the three people who had died whilst Anna Zwanziger was in their houses. After many formalities had been gone through, this was done. The remains of Frau Glaser, Judge Grohmann, and Frau Gebhard, were taken from the earth. (This is a horrible business, this exhumation process, and many hardened surgeons, who have had years in the dissecting-room, have been known to shirk it.)

Meantime, Anna, quietly living at Bayreuth, wrote several letters to her late employer, bitterly reproaching him for "ingratitude." She had been a faithful servant, she wrote ; she had nursed his wife with selfless devotion, and her reward was a dismissal from his service. She begged to be received back into his household.

It is possible that the absence of any reply from Herr Gebhard may have induced in Anna the first emotion of fear. She quitted Bayreuth and went suddenly to Nuremburg. Restless and perhaps anxious, she incontinently left that city and travelled to Mainfernheim, but a few days later went back to Nuremburg. By this time the authorities had come to the conclusion that a strong prima-facie case had been made out against the woman. A posse of police went to Nuremburg on

the 18th October, 1809, and arrested her on the charge of wilful murder.

Poisoners are frequently rash people. So attached do they become to their poisons that they love to carry them on their persons, sometimes indeed taking out the drugs to gloat over the powders or liquids. Thus did it come about that when Anna Zwanziger was searched at the police bureau, a quantity of arsenic and a quantity of tartar emetic were found in her pockets.

She was a fool, of course, but how often the criminal is not only a fool, but almost imbecile in his methods. He is so rash—he rushes so hotly at his objective—that he does not stop to make plans. Had this woman possessed the foresight to secrete her poisons in some remote place, it is possible that she would not have been convicted, for, after all, the defence might have convinced the Court that the three deaths occurring during her sojourn in the houses, were mere coincidences. But the presence of the poisons in her pockets spoke for itself.

After several preliminary examinations, during which the usual German prolixity was much in evidence, she was sent back to prison to await her trial. She was very calm and confident, feeling certain that she would be acquitted.

Bavarian criminal trials in former days were on lines different in one essential respect from trials-by-jury in this country. For the Judge acted not only as the presiding official of the Court, but also as the Prosecutor,

putting before the jury all the facts and allegations on behalf of the Crown. But this was not all, for it was his duty, moreover, to present any facts that might be in favour of the accused. The counsel for the defence would then avail himself of those facts and call his witnesses.

Anna's first action was to implicate Glaser in the murder of his wife. The man was arrested, but after a few brief examinations, was able to satisfy the magistrates of his innocence. She was then placed upon her trial, and throughout its course she denied everything. She showed remarkable skill and cunning, not only in the manner wherein she replied to questions, but by her cleverness in evading certain queries.

The trial ended, but no conviction was registered. So impartial—so admirable was Bavarian administration of justice that it was held that a person could not be convicted of murder unless some sort of confession was extracted. Nevertheless, the affair could not be abandoned, and so trial followed trial, and two years went by.

It seemed to the authorities that Anna Zwanziger would escape them and that they would be compelled in the final event to send her back to the world a free woman, when, of a sudden, the unexpected happened. For the woman, without giving the smallest suggestion of what was going to happen, collapsed and made a full confession as she stood writhing in the dock. With a loud scream, she proclaimed her guilt. The accumulated courage and endurance of years died. She was

no longer the callous, clever witness ; she was a shrieking, baffled, huddled-up bundle of faded clothes. The face seemed to have died—the hunched shoulders shook with misery. “ Yes, I killed them all, and would have killed more if I had had the chance,” she shrieked. Then, suddenly, she collapsed and rolled over and over on the floor of the Court !

The trial had stretched (as we have said) over the period of two years, but now that the confession had been made, there was no further delay, and the Law hastened to see justice done on this diabolical woman.

On a blazingly hot day in July 1811, Anna Zwanziger was roused from sleep and told that she was to prepare for the end. During the passage of the three days that had elapsed since the promulgation of the sentence she had behaved very admirably, showing the apparent penitence and religious fervour that are so often evident on these occasions. (Indeed, the more ferocious the murderer, the more does he appear to revel in sentimental outpourings.) Anna Zwanziger could find no words sufficiently strong to describe her crimes and her remorse !

Nevertheless, the woman went to the block with a lie on her lips, for again she protested that Glaser had killed his wife. Having said this, she helped the executioner to remove her neck-covering. Her hair was then cut short at the back, and the short, squat figure knelt down to die. She muttered a prayer. The axe then fell,

and human justice had said its last word to Anna Maria Zwanziger !

Of her life in prison, certain anecdotes are told—stories that reveal the terrible depths to which she had gone down.

A day or two before the execution, she smiled and said that it was perhaps a very fortunate thing for many people that she was to die, for had she lived she would have continued to poison men and women indiscriminately. When the arsenic was found on her person after the arrest, she seized the packet and gloated over the powder, looking at it, the chronicler assures us, as a woman looks at a lover. When the attendants asked her how she could have brought herself calmly to kill people with whom she was living—whose meals and amusements she shared—she replied that their faces were so stupidly healthy and happy that she desired to see them change into faces of pain and despair !

Mad, you will say, you who read these lines ! Well, even if one accepts the plea of madness, and criminal law rejects it except in very special circumstances, does that mere word “ Mad ” explain the problem ! Why should the trifling modification of a few brain-cells convert a man or woman into a beast of prey ?

However, it is not our business to discuss the question here and now. Let us end this study of a woman-poisoner with the comment that when a woman is possessed of criminal instincts of this type, she is frequently far more cruel than a man. Lombroso tells us that some of their

methods of torture are so horrible that they cannot be described without outraging the laws of decency. He speaks, also, of a woman who, having trapped a rival, compelled her to die slowly of starvation, whilst chained to a table on which was displayed a variety of tempting foods. Another woman forced a man who had wronged her to swallow portions of his own roasted flesh !

Anna Zwanziger did not employ tortures of this kind, because her poisons sufficed her cravings. It is possible that even in the hour of death she found a certain satisfaction in the reflection that she was dying as a martyr to the cause of the poisoning force that she had served so well !

GAETANO MAMMONE

THE "VAMPIRE" BRIGAND OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

CRIME, we are informed by the statisticians and the moralists, is rarely a paying business. The criminal, whether he be street-thief, forger, burglar, coiner, or *souteneur*, does not often pile up respectable bank balances or trustee stock investments. He is beset by two incessant drains upon his income—his own extravagance, and the heavy tax imposed by the people who exploit him. Even the gigantic planners of crime—the men typified by "Professor Moriarty" in the pages of *Sherlock Holmes*—fare little better, for they are at the everlasting mercy of blackmailers.

Once, however, in a very "blue moon," the criminal heaps up a fortune and dies in his bed. Here is the story of such a man—an Italian robber—perhaps the most monstrous and vicious of his tribe—who passed from illicit brigandage to the more respectable brigandage of war, became an officer in the Royal Army, and lived to a very advanced age.

Gaetano Mammone, born about 1769, began to prey upon travellers in the valleys and mountains of his native land when he was little more than a boy. He married young, but finding that wife and child were useless encumbrances, took the way of least resistance by murdering both of them. The child had annoyed him by its wailings during an illness. The killing of the wife followed because she had vexed Gaetano's peace with lamentations concerning the infant.

He was an enormous man, this Gaetano, with a strength of limb and muscle that caused legends to cling to his name. It was said of him that he could lift a horse with ease—could break a thick iron bar across his knee. It was said of him that he appeared to absorb vitality from all men and women with whom he came in contact, leaving them exhausted. This mental vampirism was eclipsed by a more literal and more horrible vampirism to which we must refer at a later stage.

His methods were simple. Having waylaid with his gang, a traveller, he would order him to deliver up his property. If the property was not sufficiently valuable, if Gaetano had reason to believe that something was being withheld, he would proceed to inflict horrible tortures upon the wretched man with a view to forcing him to disclose possible treasure. Thus, on one occasion, he encountered an old man and his daughter, whom he forced to dismount from their mules, whilst the gang searched their persons. Nothing of value was found. Gaetano then produced his torture-implements, whereupon the half-fainting traveller pointed to his boots. The boots were wrenched off and found to hold a quantity of gold. For this act of "deceit" as the brigand termed it, the wretched old man was immediately put to death. The girl was outraged, and a few days later, followed her father.

Gaetano was no respecter of persons. Having learned that the French Ambassador was on his way to the

Court of King Ferdinand, the gang lay in wait for the diplomat, who at length came into view whilst the brigands were in close ambush. For some reason which the chronicler does not state, the Ambassador was riding alone, unaccompanied by secretary or other person. Not only did Gaetano rob the Ambassador of his purse and his jewellery, but actually stripped the man naked so that his richly embroidered clothing might be added to the booty. To cover his nudity, he was given a filthy cloak, worn with age, and in this guise was allowed to depart for Naples.

The Ambassador, naturally, was furious, and complained bitterly to the King. Ferdinand sent for a Minister and charged him to take immediate steps for the capture of the brigand. But at this point diplomacy intervened to save the head of Gaetano Mammone. The Minister, after preliminary apologies, explained that Gaetano was far too valuable an asset to the safety of the throne to be sacrificed to an Ambassador's wish for vengeance. Rebellion was making itself felt—the Republican party might at any time attempt to destroy the Monarchy. Gaetano, the Minister pointed out, was a very useful person, in that his journeyings and his adventures frequently enabled him to gain valuable information regarding the doings of the revolutionaries. “Destroy this brigand,” said the Minister in effect, “and we lose a spy whom we cannot afford to lose.” Eventually, Ferdinand contented himself with the sending of a message to the brigand (by means of one of the gang who had been captured and was then

set free), to the effect that his robberies would be ignored in high quarters providing he took care in the future not to molest high officials *en route* to Court, or personal friends of His Majesty. To this ingenuous message Gaetano replied with the most exaggerated courtesy. He humbly begged the pardon of the King for the insult placed on the Ambassador, offering to return his clothing (but not his gold), and vowed that he would exercise the most scrupulous care in his future dealings with travellers. He ended by protesting that the King had no more loyal subject than himself.

One imagines that the life of the brigand in Italy was a more pleasant affair than the life of the highwayman in England. The highwayman was a solitary creature—the brigand had the solace of friends, and the prestige of a certain power. Whereas the highwayman was little more than a street-thief who had taken to the road, the brigand frequently formed a member of some semi-political association, crude enough, it is true, but dignified by aims not entirely connected with personal gain. Sometimes, revenge formed the leading motive of a gang—who came together to carry on a feud. They lived in good style, these adventurers of the mountains—they had their camp fires and their songs—their romances and their women. Not always were they the monstrous villains of the Gaetano type. Some indeed were kindly—would give to the poor a portion of what they took from the rich.

Gaetano, however, claimed no such virtues. He knew

himself for what he was—a desperate brute, who laughed at a patriotism except when it served his purpose—who revelled in cruelty for its own sake—who frequently killed a man in order that he might watch the agonies of his passage.

In 1799, Gaetano had rendered certain services to the reigning house that actually gained him the rank of Captain in the Army. It is an ironical reflection on the ethics of war that we find the brigand rejoicing in his new occupation, because it would afford him greater chances of stealing and killing! He was now free to carry on these trades without fear of interruption, and in the years that followed he gratified his thirst for blood to the uttermost ends.

Blood in its literal sense had become a sort of obsession with this monster. For some time he had made a practice of drinking it on certain occasions when he believed that his tremendous strength was failing him. He said that the taste of it was more delightful than the taste of the most exquisite wines of France or Italy—and that the man who had once formed an affection for the “Scarlet vintage” would not exchange it for the juice of the grape.

He had two horrible methods of enjoying this blood-drinking. Sometimes he would sever the artery of a victim, and then bending down beside the wretched man, would suck the blood whilst the wretch was still living, uttering cries of joy between the draughts. When in a more leisurely mood, he would cut off the head of the victim—excise the brains—and having made a sort of

drinking cup of the interior of the skull, would fill it with blood and proceed to slake his disgusting thirst !

His health was wonderful. Plagues passed by him, leaving him untouched. He went his way with gay feet, apparently the happiest man in Italy. He said sometimes that he ought to have been miserable by reason of his crimes, but that, fortunately, he had not been burdened with a conscience. He held the view, perhaps, that a man of his abnormal strength and vitality, might commit without fear of retribution crimes that would torment the average man. He came to look upon himself as a privileged personage—before whom all problems of right and wrong went down.

Undoubtedly he was successful as a soldier and a strategist. He performed many remarkable feats, and showed himself possessed of great courage. He would go into battle armed with a short dagger, and seeking the most perilous position, would stab with a ferocity that so terrified the enemy that many of them fled without coming to grips with him. Ferdinand was enchanted with his new officer, and the brigand's crimes were quickly forgotten !

Gaetano now had an opportunity to win distinction for himself by the use of his strategic gifts, but with the natural preference of a cruel man, he relied upon savagery even when less brutal methods would have served his purpose. He loved to know that people went sick with terror when he came near. Some twist in his composition made him enjoy the inflicting of pain.

He was not a Sadist—that is to say he did not employ the agonies of women to intensify his enjoyment of the sense. But one imagines that the giving of pain endowed him with a sensation of power—of superiority. It was as if he said to a writhing victim: “Here am I, strong, happy, without pain, and there are YOU, a poor wretched creature whom I can cause to dance to any tune I desire by reason of my power of making you suffer.”

Sometimes the monster organized spectacular horrors that would have delighted a Nero or a Caligula. Thus, on the occasion when he had taken a number of prisoners after a skirmish, he drove them all into a large barn. Their hands were then nailed to tables and walls. An hour later, the barn was filled with straw and oil, the doors were locked, and the prisoners were burned to death.

He loved blasphemies and frequently committed hideous sacrilege. After the capture of Altamara, he entered the principal church of the place, and organized a burlesque Mass. In that church there were two people—an old man and an old woman, who feebly protested against the disgusting business. The reply of Gaetano was characteristic. With his own hands, he slaughtered both of them. The dead man was then flayed. A scrap of his skin was used as a wafer, a portion of his blood for the communion cup, and Gaetano, roaring with laughter, improvised a Mass for his soul!

The passage of the years brought no Nemesis to Gaetano. He went from success to success, rising high in the

Royal esteem, and piled up a very considerable fortune. He was lucky in his epoch—he lived at a time when evil government and lawlessness brought many foul adventurers to a harbour of safety and riches. Of his last years we have no exact record, but may conclude that he died as he had lived, remorseless, content, and conscienceless. The materialists who hold that the pangs of conscience are merely morbid symptoms of unsatisfactory physical health, would be satisfied with Gaetano, for certainly he was an example made to their hands. His abnormal vitality sent him through his long career, untouched by illness—the man who had never known a day's suffering was able to laugh at the sufferings of other men. But let the moralists take heart when they contemplate his life. For, although he boasted that he felt no qualms, it is possible that the boast was bluff—the he, too, had to fall into line with the rest of humanity, and that he, too, knew his evil hour. “*Quisque suos patimur manes!*”

Brigandage, once almost universal, has of recent years been confined (in Europe) to Italy, Spain, Corsica, and Greece, although there have been isolated cases in other countries. Those countries by reason of their geographical characteristics have afforded shelters and refuges to bands of robbers. One frequently finds that a favourable geographical situation, combined with a weak or evil government, tends to produce a state of brigandage. In the case of Italy, there was in former times an additional security for breakers of the law, because the presence of a

number of small States afforded a refuge. The brigand had merely to cross a frontier, and was at once immune. Again, the political situation was often in his favour, for by offering his assistance to one party or the other, he gained a sort of official recognition and aid.

The brigand has in all ages been a favourite theme of romancers and musicians. "Fra Diavolo," a contemporary of the notorious Gaetano, has been celebrated by Auber in his opera of that name. The composer, Michael Bergson, whose works never achieved the fame that they merited, chose the story of Salvator Rosa, fallen into the hands of brigands, as his subject for a remarkable opera. Schiller in *The Robbers*, wrote of the robber-barons, who were certainly brigands, even though they dedicated their aims to partially altruistic ends. English literature has had little to say of brigandage, because England, a non-mountainous country, and a country that has always been more or less well governed and free from revolutionary turmoil, has afforded no shelter for men who must have a secure hiding-place or abandon their labours. England, on the other hand, has her literature of the highwayman, but whereas the highwayman was (with a few exceptions) a mere sordid thief who had taken to the road, the brigand of Southern Europe was sometimes a man of character, driven to lawlessness by some vindictiveness of fortune, or by some impulse of vengeance on society.

Whilst hills and fastnesses and insecure governments remain, the brigand will perhaps always have a certain existence, in spite of motors, wireless apparatus, and all

the other civilized contrivances that appear to render brigandage an anachronism. Even the monstrous savagery of a Gaetano Mammone may find its repetition in the future. But the brigand as an institution is dead—and even the most romantic-minded lover of the past would not wish for his resurrection. His picturesqueness was perhaps his only good possession—remove that glamour and we see a skulking thief and a cold-blooded murderer !

ANDREW BICHEL

A BAVARIAN MURDERER OF THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY WHO USED PRETENDED MAGIC TO ATTRACT HIS VICTIMS

IT is perhaps a surprising thing that the case of Andrew Bichel has not gained for itself more notoriety in criminal history. For the man was unique in some ways. Unique because he appears to have lived an entirely honest and decent domestic life for many years, suddenly developing a taste for murder without any clear reason for this abrupt degeneration. The mass-murderer, even if he begin to destroy life at a late time in his career, has usually paved the way to crime by robbery or violence. Henri Landru had robbed and embezzled for many years before he chose murder as a means of profit. Patrick Mahon, hanged a few years ago for a very cruel and deliberate murder of a young woman who had been his mistress, had been burglar, pickpocket, and many other things evil before he committed the capital crime. But Bichel was a hard-working peasant—toiling honestly enough in a small inn, a good husband and father, a regular worshipper at his parish church. It has been written of this man that he neither drank, gambled, nor quarrelled. His solitary vice throughout those years of honesty—a vice that developed when he became a criminal—was avarice. Avarice of the hardest and most uncompromising sort. The loss of a trifling coin would send him into despair—the chance finding of a similar coin in the street or in a tavern, would make him happy for many days afterwards.

Here, again, Bichel was unique. The criminal is very rarely a miser. He spends his money as swiftly as he earns it, is frequently very generous, and is always hard up. Even Landru who was a careful business-like murderer, who kept an account of every sum he expended, no matter how small, was not a miser, and was ready to be generous to any stray "grisette" who attracted him. Bichel, a true miser, loved money as a thing in itself.

Moreover, Bichel was an abnormally cowardly person. Even when the fellow was leading an honest and harmless life, he went in terror of the authorities, fearing that they might arrest him on some imaginary charge. It is possible that he would never have fortified himself with the physical courage which the act of murder demands had he not first of all protected himself from retaliation on the part of the victims by a diabolically clever and subtle trick. That trick will be described in a few minutes.

Let us sum up now the three features of Bichel that distinguish him from the majority of his fellow-murderers.

1. There was no paving of the way to crime. He seems to have become a thief and murderer as the result of some sudden decision.
2. He was an inordinate miser.
3. He was a complete coward.

Bichel was not ambitious in the direction of gain. Like many men of the miser type, he was concerned more anxiously with *saving* a few coins than in amassing

a large number. It is not surprising, therefore, that when he began to murder for profit, he was ready to content himself with absurdly small "returns."

He was sensible enough to realize that the more humble his victims, the less would be his chances of detection. A rich—an important person—cannot vanish incontinently without a mass of friends making swift enquiries. On the other hand, a poor and obscure servant, many miles from home, may go out one night, fail to return, and arouse by her disappearance little more than a few perfunctory official enquiries. This truth was more apparent a hundred years ago than to-day, because the world was then a less democratic place than the world as we know it, and the value of human life was largely appraised in terms of pounds, shillings, and pence.

Superstition, always a very rich growth among the poor and ignorant, seemed to Bichel a means to an end. A very wide reader of books dealing with Magic, he presently hit upon the notion of posing as a fortune-teller and astrologer. By this means he would be enabled to bring to his house many women. He did not desire to traffic with men, for their physical strength might make the killing of them a dangerous business. But a foolish, pliant young domestic servant, seamstress or shop-assistant was in another class from the aggressive male. She would come to his house, ready to acquiesce in all the demands of the supposed "reader of the future."

Moreover, in order to protect himself still further,

Bichel decided that he would choose for his victims (as a rule) women who did not belong to the little town of Regendorf in Bavaria, in which place he contemplated carrying on his new trade. He reflected with good reason that a native of the town was more likely to be missed than a casual visitor. Again, a girl on holiday would doubtless carry all her money on her person, afraid to leave it at her temporary lodging. A subtle rogue, this Bichel, who took no chances, and who was not ready to begin the business of murder until he had protected himself from the smallest risk.

Everything went according to plan. To the stuffy little room, furnished with cheap Oriental trappings, and scented with stupefying perfumes, came many women, young and old, the majority, of the lower-middle class. They came to Bichel to ask questions concerning possible husbands, babies, money-matters, travel, health, and sometimes put to him questions on matters of a medical nature. When Bichel had possessed himself of secrets of a delicate sort, he added to his income as a fortune-teller by judicious blackmail. But here again, he was cautious. He did not terrify and drive away the victims by asking big sums. The man seemed temperamentally unable to think in terms of vastness. A few silver coins would, in most cases, satisfy his demands. He was dealing, of course, with persons of small means, but one imagines that had a very rich woman come to his house, mere force of habit would have held him from asking a considerable amount !

And so he prospered. He showed a fine taste in the choosing of victims, knowing that murder would not always be his best investment. The majority of his clients came, put their questions, received the answers, paid the small fees and departed safely enough. But when Bichel with a certain diabolical intuition had satisfied himself that a client was carrying on her person a good amount of money, then he would decide that she must die.

The business of killing was done thus.

Bichel having received his client with great politeness and with an air of mystery that doubtless impressed the foolish young woman, would presently produce an elaborately decorated mirror which he would place upon the table. The girl would be seated in a high-backed chair and required to look into the glass so that the concentration might evoke the images which Bichel assured her would soon develop.

The images having failed to show themselves, Bichel with an assumption of annoyance would proceed to point out that he had omitted a very essential ceremony. The mystic powers would not reveal the future in the mirror unless the eyes of the seeker after knowledge were bandaged so that they might not be distracted by outward things. Moreover, in order to maintain a rigidity of body necessary to the "ritual," her hands must be tied behind the chair.

To-day, such a thing might be possible with foolish persons, but only in isolated cases. The average young woman, no matter how rustic her surroundings, has

received an education of a kind and is frequently a student of the criminal reports in the Press. One hundred years ago, Bavarian peasants were on the intellectual level of a modern child of ten. Just as a child of that age would doubtless see nothing absurd in the suggestion that has been recorded, so did the victims of Bichel see nothing to cause them alarm. On those occasions, however, when the more sensible women refused to undergo the blindfolding and the binding, he abandoned his murderous resolves, and having told them a few meaningless predictions, took their fees and let them go.

The girl, having been rendered harmless, Bichel would suddenly take up his position behind her, and with two swift moments would end her life. He would cut through the spinal cord at the junction of the neck and spine, and would finish the horrible business by stabbing the woman in the lung. After the murder, he would remove all the clothing and possess himself of the money and trifling jewellery of the victim. His avarice made him preserve the clothing with a view to selling it at a later time. Moreover, to ensure the securing of a multitude of saleable garments, he would sometimes impress upon a prospective client that she must bring with her to the "sitting," three changes of dress! These additions went to swell his wardrobe.

It was this passion for the small profits resulting from murder that subsequently led to the detection of Bichel. Had he been less avaricious, had he been content to murder and steal money only, he might

have escaped his ultimate arrest for very many years. But his miserliness was of such stuff that the tiniest possession of the victims (if marketable) had to be kept.

The burial-place of the victims was a woodshed at the rear of the house. The dead woman was buried in a shallow grave, and the earth having been replaced was covered with shavings and litter. From time to time when girls vanished, apathetic enquiries were made, but no suspicion attached itself to Bichel. Made confident by his immunity from detection, he continued to murder and rob whenever the potential victim yielded to his devices.

The relatives and friends of the women who vanished were hard-working people of the poorer class who had not the time and the money to institute energetic proceedings to trace the missing ones. An exception, at length, occurred in the case of Catherine Seidel, murdered by Bichel in 1808. The girl's sister had been enormously devoted to Catherine, and had vowed that she would not cease her efforts to discover her whereabouts if she were yet alive.

She seems to have been a woman of character, this sister, for she went from place to place, seeking information, enduring all sorts of rebuffs and insults during the search. At certain houses where she appeared, she was driven away on the plea that she sought to blackmail. At other houses, it was believed that she came there to rob. But she was not discouraged, and day by day went on with the search.

She was near despair when chance came to her assistance, and it was that chance which brought Bichel to justice. For it happened that whilst the sister was in a tailor's shop in Regendorf, talking to the tailor, she was observant enough to perceive that he was making up a waistcoat from a piece of unusual dimity. She uttered a cry of amazement; for in that dimity she had recognized the material which Catherine *had worn as a petticoat* when she was dressed in her best garb.

Instantly she questioned the tailor, asking him how and where he had obtained this material. The man told her that he had bought it from Bichel, the fortune-teller. Hearing this, the sister recalled the fact that Catherine had told her long since that she intended consulting the reader of the future.

The acute-minded young woman went home and pondered the situation. Here was a strange coincidence she told herself—a coincidence that was perhaps too remarkable to be overlooked.

Then there returned to her memory an interview which she had with Bichel soon after the disappearance of Catherine. The man had admitted that Catherine had come to him as client, but had sworn that the girl had eloped with a certain man whom she had met there. At the time, the sister had accepted this statement, because she was well aware of the erratic and amorous tendencies of Catherine, but the coming of that section of material in the tailor's workshop had developed in her a sudden suspicion. Bichel had lied to her, she told

herself, and he must have had a very sound reason for the falsehood.

She went immediately to the police and told her story. Now the authorities had never looked with favour on Bichel, whose trade they disliked, but in view of the fact that he had been a well-behaved person, regular in his attendance at church, and civil to all persons, they had decided to leave him undisturbed. Nevertheless they were not sorry to have an opportunity of investigating his practices, and accompanied by the sister, they went in force to his house, informed him of their suspicions, and instituted a rigorous search.

In a large trunk in the bedroom, they presently discovered a mass of womens' clothes, boots, undergarments, and corsets. Bichel, as we have said, had preserved all these things so that they might bring him profit when sufficient time had elapsed to make their sale a safe process. He had been foolish enough to sell the dimity too soon! Witnesses were summoned who were able to swear that certain of the garments had been worn by Catherine Seidel on the day when they had last seen her alive.

Questioned as to how the contents of the trunk had come into his hands, Bichel, trembling with fear, but assuming an air of profound innocence, replied that the garments had been sold to him by their owners. There was no obvious reason why this very common-place explanation should not be accepted; and the police were on the point of leaving the house, when they suddenly paused, held back by the barking of the dog

which they had brought with them—a very acute animal trained in criminal hunting.

The dog was in the woodshed at the back of the house. Instantly, the police sought the shed. Finding that the dog refused to budge, and hovered over a certain spot, they resolved to dig. Spades were sent for, and in a few minutes, a quantity of human bones was unearthed, together with dismembered arms, legs, and feet. A severed head of a young woman was found later. This head was afterwards identified as the head of Barbara Reisinger who had disappeared in 1807.

Bichel having stolidly refused to make a confession, was confronted a few days later with the remains of the victims, the authorities believing that this process might bring him to speak.

During this horrible encounter Bichel showed great terror. His face was very white, and he came near to being sick, but refused to speak a word that would incriminate himself. It is conceivable that some sort of torture would have been applied to him to force his confession, but that brutal expedient was not required. For after he had been taken back to his cell a certain reaction came to him. His nervous system broke down—he burst into tears, and having sent for the governor of the prison, he made a complete avowal of his deeds.

He revealed everything—the bringing of the victims to the chair, the blindfolding, the binding, the stabbing. He denied, however, that he had murdered all the

women who had disappeared. He admitted the killing of Barbara Reisinger, Catherine Seidel, and several others, but swore that he had let many escape because he was afraid to kill them. "I would not touch them unless they were securely bound," he naïvely added.

The trial of this mass-murderer was, of course, a mere thing of form. He was found guilty and sentenced to be broken on the wheel. A horrible punishment, this, that endured until the early part of the last century in more than one "civilized" community. The victim, stripped naked, was bound to a section of a wheel. Stretched on a partial circumference, his body tied so tightly that the cords bit into the flesh, his bones were broken, one by one, by a heavy hammer. In the case of Bichel, the sentence of the wheel was eventually abandoned, and he suffered the minor penalty of decapitation.

A few minutes before the end, Bichel, whose face was contorted with terror, told the priest who was attending him, that he feared he might meet in the next world his victims, who would inflict horrible vengeance on his defenceless shade. The priest, helpless in the face of this soul-torment, could only mumble words he had learned concerning pardon and repentance. "Do not tell me of repentance," whined Bichel, "but tell me if the dead can tear and injure?" "We are all of us, living and dead, in the hands of God," replied the priest, and with that half-hearted consolation, Bichel was thrust forward to meet his punishment.

Those theorists who love to point to heredity and to environment as the chief predisposers to consistent crime, will find Bichel a very difficult puzzle. For his heredity was apparently decent enough, and for many years, as we have said, he lived a blameless life in a society which certainly did not tend towards demoralization. A recent writer on criminology has put forward the bold assertion that *all* mass-murderers have had an evil heredity. The facts, however, do not confirm this statement. Heredity, environment, undoubtedly play important parts in a number of cases, but the explanation of the mass-murderer's psychology perhaps lies outside the region of material investigation.

PIERRE FRANÇOIS LACENAIRE

A CYNIC-MURDERER WHO FORMULATED A CRUDE
PHILOSOPHY OF CRIME

THE philosopher-murderer is a rare thing. The man whom a philosophical attitude towards life robs of avarice, desire, and vengeful passion, will not readily kill. The murderer-philosopher is in another class. In him, the passions predominate—the philosophy is an afterthought. In this category we must place Pierre François Lacenaire, a clumsy criminal, who achieved nothing by his crimes—of whom we would not be writing to-day but for a certain remarkable personality that has gained for him a place in the calendar of evil deeds.

The “Lacenaire” was a pseudonym adopted by him in early manhood. His real name was Gaillard. He was born of rich middle-class parents in Francheville, near Lyons, in 1800. His early years were made unhappy by the fact that his father and mother neglected him in favour of an elder brother. It is possible that he developed in those years a moroseness and a cynicism that coloured the years that came afterwards. He was a student of Voltaire—drank greedily of atheistical doctrines, and before he had reached the age of twenty was a materialist and a very definite cynic.

He was to have been a barrister, but a sudden falling-off of his father's prosperity broke down the hopes of Lacenaire in that direction. Many years afterwards, he spoke of this disappointment, and suggested that his degeneration had been caused

by it. One imagines, however, that Lacenaire, lazy, irresponsible, would not have made a success at the Bar, or indeed in any region where hard work and single-mindedness were essential. He would probably have failed as an honest man as grievously as he failed as a criminal.

After working fitfully in several undistinguished employments, he joined the Army, serving in Morea against rebellious Greeks. In 1829, he returned to France to find his father was a bankrupt. Recognizing that no help was to be expected in that direction, he tried to earn a living by writing. His caustic articles brought him enemies. He fought a duel with one of them and killed his man. In his *Memoirs*, written in prison at a later time, Lacenaire records the effects upon his brain and heart of this first experience of death. He tells us that he watched his opponent's struggles with "cool amusement and indifference." He experienced no hatred for the man—he watched him with the aloof interest of the naturalist who experiments with flies!

He escaped legal trouble in connection with the duel, but soon afterwards found himself in prison for a very impudent fraud. In 1830 he was a free man again, once more using his pen to make a living. He wrote songs, verses, satirical pieces. When the literary work failed to bring in money, he stole or swindled in other ways.

In 1833 we find him in jail for the second time. Here

he met a political prisoner, M. Vigoreux, the editor of the strongly Radical journal, *Le Bons Sens*. Vigoreux was immediately attracted to the interesting young convict who talked philosophy and whose charm of manner might have gained the friendship of a person far less sympathetic than the kindly Socialist. Vigoreux became his friend and promised to give him work when his time in prison had ended.

Immediately after his release, Lacenaire made a sensation by writing and contributing to the journal a very remarkable article dealing with the demoralizing odour of prison life. He took the obvious facts, and by means of fanciful embroidery made them seem new. He showed, as many writers before him had shown, that a man was usually a worse person after leaving prison than before he had entered its gates. The article gave the impression of a humanitarian anxious to reform a vicious system. However, at the very moment of its inception Lacenaire was deliberately contemplating a life of crime. In jail, he had frequently amused his companions by his reasoned and apparently logical defence of criminal practices. He was now ready to proceed from theory to action.

He had now come to the decision that his literary work would not yield him enough money to gratify his desires. He had no illusions regarding his talents—never did he look upon himself as a neglected genius. Lacenaire was essentially French in that he was a realist. He weighed the comparative financial potentialities of literature and crime, and came to the conclusion (falsely

enough, as it proved in the result) that crime would be the better paymaster.

In prison he had made the acquaintance of Pierre Avril, a coarse brute, exactly the assistant whom Lacenaire desired. For he had no wish to yoke himself with a companionable spirit—with a man like himself in point of education and outlook. Lacenaire held that he must invariably be the master. His assistants might be technically accomplices, but in reality they would be his servants. Avril, glad to be associated with brains and initiative, immediately consented to form a partnership in any kind of crime that seemed lucrative.

Lacenaire had always been attracted by banks. He could not pass a banking-house in the streets without pausing to consider the treasures of the strong-room. It was natural, therefore, that in contemplating criminal adventures, he should turn his attention to those institutions.

He hired an apartment in an assumed name for Avril and himself. A large bank was then visited, and some imaginary transaction was arranged which would involve a messenger coming to the house with a bag of gold. The first attempt failed, so did the second and the third. The scheme had been to steal the gold and murder the messengers.

Lacenaire was not discouraged. He decided to abandon the bank robberies for the moment, and to turn his attention to the Rue St. Martin, where there lived an old jail-friend of his own, named Chardon. This Chardon, a plausible scoundrel, who sold holy images

in the streets, was said to own a large quantity of gold which he had hidden in a cupboard in the room of his bed-ridden mother, with whom he lodged.

Now here was an adventure that seemed promising enough. What was easier than to pay a visit to an old acquaintance, ostensibly a friendly visit, and to despatch him and the mother at the same time? Lacenaire was delighted. Not only would he gain considerable moneys, but at the same time would pay off old scores to Chardon, whom for some reason he had always hated.

The crime was planned for the 14th December, 1834. On that day Lacenaire carefully sharpened a small iron file, so as to produce a stabbing point. Then, having fortified this impromptu weapon with a strong cork handle, he set out with Avril for the Rue St. Martin.

They met Chardon on the stairs. The man innocently invited them to his room. The instant they were in the place, the man Avril pinioned him. At the same time, Lacenaire stabbed him with the file, Avril then seized a large hatchet that was hanging on the wall and finished the victim with blows on the head.

All this was done with the coolness and decision of men setting out chessmen for a game. Avril and Lacenaire then went to the bedroom where the old mother lay bedridden, unable to move, unable to cry out beyond a whisper. Avril seized the woman, and thrust her under the heavy mattresses, where she lay half-suffocated until she died. The bed was then pushed aside so that the cupboard behind might be opened and the gold stolen. To the disgust of the murderers the

supposed hoard amounted only to 500 francs ! There were a few silver trifles in the flat, which they also took away. Their next visit was paid to a Turkish bath a few yards distant. Here they rid themselves of the blood-stains on their hands, and having dined at a quiet restaurant, spent the remainder of the evening at a theatre. Two days later, the police, having been summoned to the Chardons' flat by neighbours who had been amazed by their silence, found the two bodies. The wretched old woman must have laid for many hours in her final miseries.

The "yield" of the double murder had not been excessive. Forty pounds and half a dozen silver knives and forks or other trifles of the kind would not be regarded, even by the least ambitious of criminals, as a good harvest. But Lacenaire, who had invariably failed to achieve even forty pounds in criminal adventures, regarded the latest affair as a sort of triumph. He was so pleased with the business that he decided to renew his attempts to rob the banks. The success in the Rue St. Martin seemed to him a good augury for future adventures.

He hired for himself and Avril an apartment in the Rue Montorgueil. Posing as law-students, they were arranging to visit a bank with a view to negotiating a loan and eventually robbing the messenger of the money, when an incident happened that deprived Lacenaire of a sturdy, if stupid ally. For Avril incontinently wandered off on an expedition of his own—was caught and sent to penal servitude.

Immediately Lacenaire sought a new assistant and presently found him in the shape of a bloodthirsty ruffian who boasted in cafés that he would kill any man in Paris for twenty francs! This fellow, François by name, and "Red Whiskers" by nickname, seemed to Lacenaire an excellent successor to Avril, for he was energetic, docile, and, above all, stupid enough to emphasize the difference between Lacenaire, the intellectual criminal, and François, the commonplace, unimaginative breaker of laws.

For Lacenaire, although by no means a *poseur* in the accepted sense, invariably posed for himself. He despised humanity too deeply to play a part for the amusement or the admiration of humanity, but himself was his own theatre and his own audience. One can imagine him contemplating François with satisfied contempt, saying to himself, "What a difference! There is the clod. Here is the brain!" The introspective temperament of Lacenaire made him regard himself as the most interesting of all studies.

The new partnership being formed, Lacenaire planned another bank *coup*. He drew a bill on an imaginary M. Mahossier, who was supposed to live at the house in Paris where Lacenaire and his new accomplice had taken an apartment.

All went well up to a point. The bank-messenger, a youth of eighteen, arrived at the flat, and enquired for M. Mahossier. He was whistling, and alternately smoking a cigar. He would have shewn less lightness of heart had he known of certain preparations that had

been made against his arrival. For in the room close at hand, there was a trunk destined to hold his dead body—and straw, whereby it was afterwards to be burned to ashes. Lacenaire and his assistant had decided that cremation would be the best means of avoiding detection and conviction.

But the scheme failed. Lacenaire seemed born to achieve failure. He simply could not carry through any scheme to fruition. It is true that he contrived to inflict a slight wound on the young messenger, but before François could secure the boy, he had set up terrible screams and had darted from the room and down the stairs. The two potential murderers then fled from the house by another exit, and when the gendarmes arrived, they were at some distance from the place.

They had covered their tracks very cleverly by leaving behind them no jot of evidence that would associate them (both ex-convicts with “dossiers” in official keeping), with the attempted crime. However, shortly after this affair, both men were again in prison for minor crimes. Lacenaire had condescended to steal a clock—François had committed a petty forgery.

The authorities did not imagine for a moment that the man wanted for the murder in the Rue St. Martin was now in their keeping. It is possible, therefore, that Lacenaire would have served his short sentence and have emerged again to philosophize and to murder, but for the intervention of the very human element of hatred.

Avril in his cell was cherishing a grudge against Lacenaire. François was engaged in precisely the same obsession. Both men had followed him willingly enough when they had regarded him as a master-plotter who might lead them to victory. But throughout their association they had hated him for his aloofness—his contempt—his assumption of what they regarded as “superior” manners. They could have forgiven him perhaps if he had led them to rich gains—but seeing that he had invariably failed, they now felt for him nothing save hatred and contempt. Both men seem simultaneously to have decided on vengeance. Avril probably believed that a confession of his part in the Chardon murder might win him favour with the authorities and at the same time send the hated Lacenaire to death. François, who had no fear of the guillotine, was ready to risk execution if he might bring a similar fate upon his former associate.

And so it came about that both men began to talk to their comrades in the prison about Lacenaire and the murder in the Rue St. Martin. The desultory chat at last hardened into a formal confession.

Then the unexpected happened. The average criminal, anxious to save himself, would have indignantly rebutted the charge. But when Lacenaire was taxed with the murder of the Chardons, he astonished the police by offering a full confession.

Why did he do this? His chief motive perhaps was a desire to see vengeance done on his disloyal friends. He now regarded both of them with a very unphilosophic

hatred. Another motive may have been a sudden contempt of life. He knew himself, at length, for the failure that he was, and in the bitterness of that revelation, life had nothing further to offer him.

Lacenaire was removed from the gaol where he had been serving his short sentence and was given a comfortable room in the prison of La Force. Here his musings and his aphorisms made an instant impression on the officials, who communicated them to the Press. In a few days Lacenaire had become a personage. A "murderer philosopher" was a new thing, even in the Paris of the early nineteenth century, where strange criminals abounded.

Here was a new Villon, they told themselves—a cut-throat poet and philosopher, who was writing his *Memoirs* whilst awaiting his trial. In a moment, all Paris was thrilled, delighted, astonished, intrigued. In London, Lacenaire would have sat in a lonely cell, unvisited by none except his solicitor and the prison officials. In Paris, he was permitted to hold an informal court!

It is true that mere sensation-hunters were excluded, but every responsible person who could offer a sound motive for visiting Lacenaire, was admitted. Biologists alienists, psychologists, novelists, and poets, all came to the prison. They sat for hours, talking to the caged philosopher, writing down his wisdom in their case-books and their note-books. Lacenaire, it is said, showed great modesty in his bearing. Untouched apparently by the vanity of the criminal, he let others talk in their

turn, and impressed them all as a man of great courtesy and exceptional intelligence.

In the intervals of these discussions, Lacenaire continued to write his *Memoirs*—and in those pages he gave a faithful portrait of himself and his attitude towards men and women, life and death.

“I have never had the slightest regard for life,” he wrote. “I would at any time have killed a man as I drank a glass of wine.” “Pity is a degrading thing. I have never pitied others and I want none for myself.” “I welcome death. I could never have lived in prison, and death is only a moment’s pain.” . . . “Emotion has always been unknown to me. Never in my life have I felt remorse for any act. Nothing has ever disturbed me nor robbed me of a night’s perfect sleep.”

Questioned by an interviewer regarding the possibilities of a hereafter, Lacenaire quietly replied that he had not troubled himself to consider the matter. “Death is so small a thing that I shall postpone thinking of it until the exact moment arrives,” he said with a sincerity that was not to be doubted. There is no doubt that Lacenaire had posed to himself so often that he had come to believe in himself. He had set up a rigid code of philosophy, and having been guided faithfully by that code, saw no reason to doubt its solace and its truth.

The trial of Lacenaire and his accomplices took place in the Assize Court of Paris in the autumn of 1835. Lacenaire entered the dock debonair, smiling, dressed

in a blue coat of fashionable shape. His fellow-prisoners made a sharp contrast, for they were ill-kempt, unshaven, badly dressed, and half-sullen with rage and fear.

The issues presented to the jury were simple enough. There was no question concerning the facts, for the three men had offered confessions. The jury had only to apportion the guilt and to decide how far circumstances had mitigated the acts of each one of the criminals.

Lacenaire, for his part, made no attempt to extenuate his guilt. As we are aware, he had already said good-bye to life. The last desire that burned in him, giving flame to his eyes and glow to his words, was the desire to see his treacherous allies condemned to death. Throughout the trial he bore himself very quietly, making no dramatic appeals and exhibiting small vanity of manner or speech.

The defence of the prisoner was merely formal. Coincidence ruled that Lacenaire should be defended by an old schoolfellow, who had sat on a bench beside him twenty years before. The counsel did his best for his playmate, but it was little enough.

The three accused were permitted to make speeches on their own behalf. In a well-reasoned and moderate address, Lacenaire admitted that he had no wish to defend himself, but was satisfied if he might see vengeance done on his associates. "I have had no hope," he continued, "that by confessing I should be granted favour by you who sit upon the jury. I do not ask you to spare me my life. If at the same time you could offer me the



LACENAIRE

satisfaction of wealth and a happy future, I might be ready to accept that favour, but, since you cannot offer me what I desire, I do not ask it of you. It would be futile, impossible. . . .”

More followed. When at length he sat down, many people applauded. Lacenaire looked with contempt at the people who had clapped their hands, and then listened with sardonic face to the speeches of his two accomplices. A contrast, these, to the well-reasoned arguments of Lacenaire—merely emotional savage outbursts, ending with violent denunciations of life and eulogies of death!

The trial endured for three days. In an English court, short work would have been made of the simple affair, but in French courts, a large amount of evidence that would seem to us inadmissible, or at least irrelevant, is entertained with satisfaction.

The trial had stretched into the late evening, so that the jurymen leaving the court at 11 p.m. did not return until 2 a.m. François was found guilty of attempted murder—Lacenaire and Avril of wilful murder. The former was sent to penal servitude for life. The two others were sentenced to death.

A formal appeal to the Court of Cassation was made, and in the two months that stretched between the trial and the hearing of that appeal, Lacenaire continued to hold his court in prison. The crowd was now larger than before. Fashionable women strove to gain admission to the jail. Those who were refused sometimes wrote

to him letters, begging for epigrams, verses, aphorisms. To these petitions, Lacenaire replied that he must devote all his remaining time to the completion of his *Memoirs*. "I have no opportunity or inclination for imaginative efforts," he added.

To the excellent Abbé Cœur, who visited him at the request of the Archbishop of Paris, Lacenaire made the request that he would refrain from sermon-preaching. "Regard me, Abbé," he said, "as a man who is outside the conventions of life—a man on the verge of another world." The Abbé, sensibly enough, gave up attempts to talk theology. Let it be said in favour of Lacenaire that the easy and unconvincing repentance, accompanied with snivels and hysteria, shown by many murderers when they are within greeting distance of death, was not for one moment displayed by him. His stoic philosophy remained constant. To a phrenologist who came to the cell to take a cast of his head, he said that he had no belief in the purifying effect of suffering, but that suffering was a good thing if men could show courage in its endurance.

Early in January 1836, Lacenaire and his accomplice Avril, were told by the Governor of the prison that the Court of Cassation had refused the appeal. Lacenaire immediately ordered a dinner to celebrate the decision. To that dinner (an excellent meal, consisting of several elaborate dishes and excellent vintages) he invited Avril, whom by this time he had half-forgiven. The strange banquet, watched by two armed warders, was successful. At the end of it, each drank to the other's journey!

Morning, noon, and night, in the days that were now left to him, Lacenaire toiled at his *Memoirs*. The date of execution had been kept from him, but on the night of January 8th, he must have guessed that it was close at hand, for on that evening he was suddenly ordered to quit his cell in order that he might be taken to the prison at Bicêtre. Arrived at that prison, both men were brought into the little chapel to take part in their last religious service. Avril, trying bravely to conceal his fears, went on his knees and prayed. Lacenaire, true to his unbelief, remained standing in an indifferent but respectful attitude.

The time had now come for the execution. Avril was taken first. Lacenaire wished to look at the guillotine, but the priest in attendance begged him to turn away, pointing out that the action would be attributed to mere bravado on his part. Lacenaire smilingly obeyed.

Two minutes after the knife had fallen on Avril, the guards put their hands on the shoulders of Lacenaire to lead him to the guillotine. "Courage, my son!" said the priest, who was himself near fainting. Lacenaire replied "It is nothing! I do not fear it!"

But the ordeal was to prove more horrible than he had imagined. For the knife at the beginning refused to fall, and there was a wait of nearly half a minute, whilst the head of Lacenaire was imprisoned in the "lunette." In those moments the head was seen slowly to turn. And now, at last, in the eyes of the murderer, stoic, and philosopher, there was uncontrollable terror. Lacenaire was posing no longer to himself. The audience

of self had gone—the lights were down—and this actor, faced with the last reality, had thrust aside the mask that he had worn for his own soul—for his own delight !

The literary achievements of Lacenaire were not distinguished. A poem written in prison that interested many sensation-hunters (*La Sylphide*), was poor, sentimental stuff, exactly the sort of thing that a criminal who wanted to be a poet would probably write. (The criminal when he takes to writing is nearly always sugary and sentimental.) His other verses were on the same level. His satirical pieces were much better—one of them, “*The Prayer of a Thief to a King*” had a sort of Villon ring. Had Lacenaire seriously cultivated satire, he might have gained some success.

We have spoken of Villon but, unlike that poet, Lacenaire had no love for the underworld which he frequented. He rarely made friends among his associates, and indeed his cold, repellent manner was not of the sort to win friendship. He was always figuratively drawing his coat-tails away from contact with dingy humanity, and, as we have said, his downfall was finally brought about by his tendency to snobbish pretensions.

In a last survey of this strange creature, it may be said that Lacenaire was distinguished from the well-known criminal type by two important divergences. He had little vanity ; hating men and women too much to wish to impress, fascinate, or deceive them. His second divergence was his indifference to sensual

diversions. He had no love for eating and drinking—he never gambled—women he despised and disliked. We may regard him, perhaps, as a metaphysician gone bad—a metaphysician to whom all things are relative, and for whom absolute values of right and wrong have ceased to exist!

DR. EDWARD WILLIAM PRITCHARD

THE PHYSICIAN-POISONER, WHO WAS THE LAST PERSON
PUBLICLY EXECUTED IN SCOTLAND

WHEN one takes into consideration the enormous possibilities in the direction of poisoning, for monetary or other motives, that the medical profession undoubtedly has at its disposal at all times, it is reassuring to remember that perhaps only one doctor in a million has availed himself of his knowledge, his opportunities, and his drugs to do murder. There have been, however, some terrible exceptions. Prominent among those doctors who have deliberately taken life there stands Edward William Pritchard, who was perhaps one of the most callous and cold-blooded criminals that ever faced a jury.

His early history was sufficiently commonplace. After graduating in 1846 at the Royal College of Surgeons, Pritchard spent many months travelling through the world, making notes of his experiences. In 1859 he settled down in a good practice at Glasgow, having married some time previously a Miss Mary Taylor, daughter of an Edinburgh silk merchant. This marriage resulted in five children.

Now Pritchard had extravagant tastes. In order to enhance his income, he lectured on his travels, but showed a certain specious tendency to embellish and exaggerate his experiences. Deceit was the keynote of this man's character. To this was added vanity, and a love of approbation that amounted almost to an

obsession. He hated to be ignored. He flattered people and grossly fawned upon them, hoping that they in turn would pour out their flatteries upon himself.

Pritchard relied more upon his appearance than upon his knowledge and skill to impress his patients. He was a big, well-made fellow, with massive features and a long patriarchal beard. Seen at a distance, he appeared a fine type of humanity, but when one came close to him, one saw small shifty eyes, loose sensuous lips.

The outbreak of a fire at his house in Glasgow caused a certain amount of unkind gossip. A maidservant was burned to death, and malicious people hinted that the doctor had himself contrived the fire in order to get rid of the girl who had some sort of hold upon him. However, we must not add this charge to the heavy indictment against Pritchard, as there was absolutely no evidence to show that he brought about the fire. (We may suggest, however, that he was entirely capable of such a crime.)

Although apparently very fond of his wife and honestly devoted to his young children (he was a most affectionate and generous father), Pritchard was carrying on an intrigue of a very base character with a pretty nursemaid in his house. This maid, Mary McLeod, enters prominently into the terrible history of Pritchard's double crime. But for her existence, the career of that sinister personage might have entered upon a very different journey.

Whilst his wife lived he recognized that he could not establish permanent relations with Miss McLeod. He

might have eloped with her, of course, but that would not have suited his plans. For, in the first place, it was essential that he should retain his practice; in the second place, the doctor had no desire to become the chief protagonist in a divorce scandal. It is an extraordinary fact that there are many persons who are actually more willing to contemplate and to carry out a capital crime than to incur the risk of tarnishing their "respectability" and the esteem of their friends and relatives. Pritchard undoubtedly belonged to this class. Anxious to marry his mistress, he coldly and deliberately set himself to thinking out a method of paving the way to that end.

(And now, in parenthesis, let us point out that this question of motive was never raised at the subsequent trial, and indeed several criminal historians have suggested that the crimes were motiveless, because Miss McLeod had been everything except a wife to Pritchard for three years, and there was, therefore, no necessity to remove Mrs. Pritchard. But, surely, this reasoning is highly superficial. The theory put forth in the foregoing paragraph would certainly seem far more feasible.)

Immediately he decided on murder. It seemed to him the easiest way, and the criminal, like Nature herself, invariably takes the path of least resistance. He was something of an expert in the direction of toxicology, and, of course, had access to practically every kind of drug.

Eventually Pritchard came to the conclusion that a poison, slow in its effects, but cumulative and decisive,

would serve his purpose, because the symptoms could, of course, be attributed to some purely natural illness or seizure. He compounded in his surgery a very ingenious mixture of three deadly drugs—antimony, aconitine, and opium. He was far too cunning to employ prussic acid or strychnine. The instantaneous effects of the former, and the horrible convulsions, with arching of the spine, of the latter, would, of course, have immediately pointed to the presence of poison.

Now, picture Pritchard at this time without pity—without emotion of any kind—deliberately concocting a draught that should end the life of the woman whom he had sworn to protect. It is this absence of pity that makes the murderer. Either he is not imaginative enough to visualize the agonies that he is about to inflict, or, if his imagination does function, then his overweening egotism at once blots out the picture.

The poison was, of course, administered in very small doses. Gradually, the influence of the drug asserted itself, and towards the end of October 1864, the unfortunate woman developed the symptoms of general debility. Pritchard advised his wife to remain in bed, suggesting that she had perhaps caught a severe chill. The woman obeyed, but the “rest” naturally brought about no improvement in her state, seeing that the diabolical villain took advantage of his daily visits to her room to impregnate her food with tiny solutions of the compounded poisons.

The woman was now in a condition of great mental anguish. She recognized that she was very ill, very

feeble, very unhappy, and yet she was not able to specify any distinct symptom except weakness and general exhaustion. In her doubt and misery, she presently fell back upon the panacea which people frequently choose in cases of this kind—she proposed a change of air. She would go, she said, to her parents in Edinburgh.

Pritchard saw no reason to oppose this suggestion. He knew that she would have to return at some time to Glasgow. He could then continue his practices. So to Edinburgh Mrs. Pritchard journeyed, and there, free for a little space from the ministrations of her husband, she rapidly eliminated the poisonous substances from her blood. Indeed, when she came back to her home at Christmas, she gave the impression that she was completely cured.

But not for long! The doctor soon got to work, and in a very short time the old symptoms returned, but to these there was now added a hideous form of cramp.

At this point Pritchard did the conventional thing. A doctor is not supposed to attend his wife, or indeed any near relation in his house, when a serious illness is involved. He summoned, therefore, two outside practitioners, both of whom diagnosed gastric fever.

It was at this time that Mrs. Taylor, the mother of the woman who was being slowly destroyed, came upon the scene, little dreaming that she herself was taking a journey that would end in the cemetery. Anxious concerning her daughter, she came to the house in Glasgow to nurse her, as any mother might have come, but the instant Pritchard saw her under his roof, he

realized that a sudden and very obvious danger had arisen. Was it not more than possible that this keen-eyed old Scotswoman, made vigilant and perhaps intuitive by her affection, might by some gleam of instinct guess the truth ?

His fear was confirmed by a trifling episode that happened soon after the arrival of Mrs. Taylor. For it chanced that some tapioca pudding had been sent up to the bedroom for the patient. The latter was not hungry, and Mrs. Taylor herself took a few morsels of the food. Almost immediately she was attacked by symptoms similar to those that had attacked her daughter. There was violent sickness—together with considerable cramp. After a few days she recovered, but by this time Pritchard had come to a decision. He had resolved to administer poison to *the mother* as well as to the daughter.

It has been suggested that the doctor hoped by this means to get possession of the small property that belonged to the woman, but the amount involved was so meagre that one hesitates to accept this view. The theory which the writer has put forward—the theory that Pritchard was now in a state of fear lest Mrs. Taylor should light upon the truth—seems a more reasonable explanation of the contemplated crime.

This view is confirmed to some extent by the fact that the elder woman was the *first* to be removed. On the morning of the 24th February, a maidservant going to the old lady's room, found her in a state of partial collapse. Pritchard was immediately summoned by the frightened girl. He sent for a Dr. Patterson, who lived

close to the house, but before the latter arrived, Mrs. Taylor had sunk into a coma from which she never recovered.

Pritchard played his part like a very consummate actor. He exhibited violent grief and shed tears of the true "crocodile" brand. However, his "grief" did not restrain him from telling a deliberate falsehood to Dr. Patterson.

"The poor creature had been in the habit of using powerful drugs for headaches," he assured the doctor. "And, as you, of course, know, these preparations often contain opium and other narcotics."

But Patterson, shrewd and cynical Scot, was not impressed by the plausible explanation. A good reader of character, he had immediately formed a fairly accurate impression of Pritchard's mentality and temperament. After a short deliberation and a further talk with Pritchard, he firmly refused to prepare and sign a certificate of death.

Pritchard then did what all medical etiquette would, of course, have forbidden. Although he had not attended the woman, he himself drew up and signed the document, and in that document the liar affirmed that Mrs. Taylor had died of an apoplectic stroke, hastened by the frequent use of narcotic drugs. The certificate was accepted by the authorities and the funeral presently took place with the usual decorum. The doctor followed the remains of the woman whom he had destroyed, weeping throughout the ceremony in a manner that did more credit to the resources of his lachrymal glands than to

his sincerity. He was a man who could summon tears at practically any moment that he chose!

The next move of this extraordinary scoundrel was a triumph of subtlety, though in the event, it certainly did not serve its purpose. His wife, now showing signs of very serious illness, he decided to call in the very doctor who had refused to sign the certificate for her mother, so that Patterson's suspicions concerning the presence of any foul play might thus be crushed. It was a piece of exquisite bluff, but the subsequent record will show how ignominiously it failed to achieve its end.

Dr. Patterson duly paid a visit to the sick woman, and formed certain conclusions, but professional etiquette actually held him back at that time from expressing a suspicion that she was being poisoned. His behaviour, of which we shall speak more fully later, seems almost incredible. One asks oneself how any man possessed of ordinary humanity could have stood aside and seen murder done without raising his voice to intervene?

On the evening of the 17th March (exactly three weeks after the collapse of her mother), the crisis arrived in the case of Mrs. Pritchard. Her time-limit was now at hand, but with the unconquerable optimism of the brave woman that she was, she clung to the belief that her illness was a mere passing malady. In terrible pain, she rang her bell and summoned the two maidservants, Mary McLeod and Mary Patterson. The pains presently subsided somewhat, and she went to sleep, but towards

1.30 a.m. Dr. Patterson was again fetched to the house. He had been summoned by Pritchard himself who, with well-assumed horror, pointed to the bed where his wife now lay past all surgery. He became almost maudlin with apparent despair, and with a broken voice called upon the dead woman to come back to him. "I cannot live without you, my darling," he moaned, over and over again. When we remember that in another room, a few yards distant, the woman to whom he had been making hot love for several years, was probably calmly asleep, the hypocrisy of this consummate scoundrel stands out in hideous colours.

He flung himself on the body of his wife, kissing her many times, and perhaps, self-deceiver as he was (like all egotists), actually believed for the moment that he *was* mourning her loss!

To Edinburgh, where the family vault was situated, they took all that was now left of Mrs. Pritchard. At the funeral the "bereaved" husband again played his part with his usual glibness, and was once more a figure of grief, behaving so wildly in his assumed sorrow that even chance onlookers at the cemetery pitied him, and said that here was a man who must have adored his wife!

However, immediately after the ceremony, a change transfigured the subtle actor. On the way back to Glasgow, he appeared considerably brighter, and indulged in trite reflections concerning the briefness of life and the folly of too much grief. There is no doubt

that he was very happy as he journeyed that day. He probably told himself that now all would be well—that in a few months he would marry Miss McLeod and that henceforth he would live in the odour of respectability and prosperity.

Fate, like a wild-cat, usually stretches out a paw when a man is least prepared for the attack. Here was Pritchard returning home in high spirits, with the future beckoning to him with gay promises. But, even as he stepped out on the platform at Glasgow, two men came forward, touched their hats, and then placed their hands on his shoulders. In another moment, Pritchard realized with horror that he was under arrest for the wilful murder of his wife and his wife's mother.

How had this arrest been brought about? An anonymous letter-writer had been at work since the death of Mrs. Pritchard. Here is the letter that caused the authorities to take immediate action :

“ SIR,

Dr. Pritchard's mother-in-law died suddenly and unexpectedly three weeks ago in his house in Glasgow under very SUSPICIOUS circumstances. His wife died also to-day—also SUDDENLY and unexpectedly. We think it right to draw your attention to the above, as the proper person to take action in the matter and see justice done.”

The origin of this extraordinary letter was never detected, although it was hinted in some quarters that Dr. Patterson might have been the author.

After that time, events moved with great swiftness. An order was secured for the immediate exhumation of the bodies, and these were subjected to rigid analysis. Large quantities of antimony blended with other poisons were detected in the remains of each woman. Pritchard reserved his defence, and the trial was set down for a date in July 1865, at the High Court of Justiciary in Edinburgh.

The wheel had come full circle at last, and Pritchard found himself in the dock before a tribunal packed to the doors with morbid-minded, excited people, some of whom had travelled from remote parts of Scotland to see the trial. He was very cool as he entered, bowed courteously to the Bench, and then listened, with his hand to his ear, to the evidence that was brought forward by witness after witness.

The principal basis of the indictment was the fact that Pritchard had had constant access to his wife and her mother; that he had purchased abnormally large quantities of the poisons that had caused the deaths, and that no other conceivable person could have administered the doses in such manner that they escaped detection at the time.

After a number of people had given what was purely formal evidence, the sensation of the trial was furnished by Dr. Patterson. He occasioned enormous astonishment by announcing that from the beginning he had actually suspected symptoms of poisoning, but that he had not regarded it as his duty to interfere. In



DR PRITCHARD

substance, his evidence amounted to something of this nature :

“ My position roughly was this. I was merely a practitioner called in to prescribe for what, I was informed by a fellow-doctor, was a perfectly natural and not alarming disorder. I certainly used my best efforts to allay that disorder, but in view of the fact that I was not called in again after my visit to Mrs. Pritchard, except at the hour of her decease, when it was too late to save her, it was entirely unnecessary for me to take any further notice of the case.”

An amazing attitude this, and the counsel for the defence naturally subjected the doctor to a very severe cross-examination. Over and over again, the counsel put it to him that here was a case where professional etiquette was standing in the way of the averting, or at least of the denouncing, of two hideous crimes. Did the doctor still persist in his statement that he HAD suspected poisoning symptoms? Surely, if he had done this, he would have taken some definite action. And to each of these questions, hurled at him with harsh persistence, Patterson firmly and quietly replied that he had deliberately refrained from action for the reason already given.

The object of the defence in badgering thus the doctor was, of course, to weaken his evidence. He had sworn that he believed poison was being administered—why, then, had he done nothing to prevent a further administration of the deadly stuff? However, the

defence gained little by this action, and the Solicitor-General in his speech for the prosecution availed himself to the uttermost of Dr. Patterson's suspicions, and waived aside the objections of the defending counsel. Very clearly and concisely did he point out that the guilt must of necessity attach either to Pritchard or to the girl McLeod. McLeod was not indicted—the jury had to consider only the man who stood before them in the dock. Had he, or had he not, given antimony and other poisons, with intent to murder, to Mrs. Taylor and Mrs. Pritchard ?

It was not a strong case. As a matter of fact, it was a very weak case. One imagines that if precisely the same circumstances were presented to-day to a British jury, the doctor would be acquitted. For, let us remember that the evidence against him, when all was said and done, was only presumptive—it was not conclusive. It rested, as we have pointed out, on the following facts :

1. He had access to the poisons and the victims.
2. He had certainly stored up larger quantities of the poisons than was absolutely necessary for the ordinary medical purposes.
3. If Pritchard had not administered the poisons, what person could have done so ? Who else (with the exception of Mary McLeod) had an interest in the two deaths ?

None of these facts, even when considered cumulatively, would have been deemed sufficient in modern

days to convict a man of wilful murder. However, the jury of the year 1865 took a different view. Pritchard was found guilty and was sentenced to death.

The miserable man came near to fainting in the dock when he heard the verdict. He had counted on acquittal and had been comparatively cheerful during the trial. However, he soon recovered and bore himself calmly enough. A few days after the trial, he made a sort of semi-confession in which he was base enough to implicate Miss McLeod, saying that she had instigated the whole terrible business, and that he had acted under her influence. However, a little later, he sent again for the governor of the prison and recanted the statement, saying that he alone had been guilty.

During his last weeks of life, Pritchard showed the usual repentance observed on these occasions, repentance which is perhaps more of the nature of remorse. One does not wish to be cynical, but one frequently asks oneself whether any of these late repentances would stand the test of freedom and a new beginning? Imagine that Pritchard had been sent out again into the world; imagine that necessity had again driven him towards a desperate act—might he not once more have turned his thoughts to murder?

Pritchard loved his children. The letters that he wrote to them in those last days were not the hypocritical whinings of a detected criminal, but were pathetic documents—honest, pitiful. It must be said to his credit that he showed small anxiety concerning his punishment, but was terribly anxious regarding the

future of the children. He often cried when he spoke of them. . . . To every man his "heel of Achilles," and here was the heel of Dr. Pritchard !

The last scene of this sordid drama was played on the 29th July, 1865, in the Jail Square, near the Hutchinson Bridge, Glasgow. Calcraft, one of the old-fashioned executioners (a callous ruffian, entirely different from the more humane and scientific modern hangman), officiated. An enormous crowd came to the Square to look upon the last of Pritchard, and he was assailed with the howls and curses whereby a self-righteous band of morbid-minded degenerates vaunts its consciousness of virtue. He faced his end with calmness, but took several minutes to die. (The merciful "long drop" with its instantaneous quietus did not arrive until some years afterwards.) The execution of Pritchard is notable in Scots criminal records because it was the last public hanging north of the Tweed.

A MONSTER OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

THE CASE OF JEAN BAPTISTE TROPPEMAN, A BOY-MURDERER, WHO WIPED OUT AN ENTIRE FAMILY FOR GREED

THE moralizing writer who, from a seat on the bench or from a pulpit in church, loves to dilate upon the evil influence of what is sometimes called the "Penny Dreadful," would have found an admirable illustration of his theme in the case of Jean Baptiste Troppman, for it has been clearly shown that the latter devoted his childhood and boyhood to that class of literature and speedily developed a nature of lazy, vicious tendencies. Born in the tiny town of Cernay in Alsace in the year 1848, he lived at home, doing as little work as he could contrive, but assisting his father (an honest and entirely excellent man) in his business in a perfunctory manner. Before he was sixteen he had shown many disagreeable traits—molesting village girls and threatening them with savage treatment if they avoided his attentions.

Jean grew up a loafer and a parasite. He was always on the look-out for some rich person of accommodating habits whom he might bleed by specious trick or by involved intrigue. His chief desire was to avoid work. In this hatred of toil, he resembled the criminal of all ages and of all social classes.

It happened that when he was nearly twenty years old, Jean was sent by his father to the town of Roubaix, near Lille, in order to fix up some machinery. Whilst

he was in that place, he chanced to make the acquaintance of a certain Monsieur Jean Kinck, a wealthy spindle-manufacturer. The two became friends, and after a short space had elapsed, Troppman, burning to amass a sum of money that would perhaps enable him to live the remainder of his existence without effort, suddenly conceived the idea that in this man—this Jean Kinck—he had discovered a very possible source of wealth. The question that faced him was a difficult question—how was that potential source to be tapped to the best advantage ?

Now Troppman, quick-witted, cunning, and (like many swindlers) an excellent judge of character, realized immediately that his friend was far too acute a person to be victimized in the ordinary fashion. His Alsatian cunning (for Kinck, like himself, was a native of Alsace), would perhaps have enabled the man to see at once through any specious device. Gradually, the deliberate idea of murder entered the brain of this boy, for at that time he had not reached his twenty-first year.

It happened that a slight domestic difference between M. and Madame Kinck had arisen. The wife, who loved city amusements, was anxious to live in Paris; the husband, a quiet-natured bourgeois, was equally desirous of returning to his country home. Troppman, a clever opportunist, immediately seized upon this difference of opinion as an opportunity to get his potential victim to a very isolated spot near Cernay—an ideal place for the committal of a crime. With this end in view, and having definitely decided that Kinck should be destroyed, he

asked the man to meet him in the neighbourhood of Cernay, saying that he would then introduce him to a person who would offer him a delightful house, garden, stables, and other property in his beloved Alsace.

M. Kinck, delighted to find a supporter in his domestic variance, agreed with great satisfaction to the proposal. After certain details had been discussed, it was arranged that he should meet Troppman at a specified hour at the Bolwiller Station, near Cernay. With considerable cunning and forethought, young Troppman avoided travelling to Cernay in the company of the destined victim, excusing himself on the ground that he had, first of all, some rather important business elsewhere.

Now everything went according to plan. When the unsuspecting Monsieur Kinck arrived at the quiet Bolwiller Station, he was met there by Troppman, who at once travelled with him by omnibus to Soultz, where the latter deposited his luggage. A brief meal was then eaten, and afterwards, Troppman carelessly proposed a short stroll in the neighbourhood, taking with him from the restaurant a bottle of wine, in order, as he said laughingly, that they might "wet" their walk. . . . But, a few minutes before quitting the restaurant, the young assassin had taken advantage of a momentary absence of his companion to slip into the wine the contents of a phial of prussic acid which he had hidden in his pocket. It may be said without hesitation that no author planning a crime-story planned his tale with more cold-blooded attention to detail than did Troppman planning this diabolical deed.

Poor Kinck set out for the walk gaily enough. When they had arrived at a very lonely place, in the fields, Troppman smilingly insisted on his companion having the first drink. It was poor Kinck's last drink in this world, for two minutes later he lay dead, having died the agonizing death induced by prussic acid, of all vegetable poisons the most deadly and the most swift.

Troppman, coolly searching the pockets of his victim, found in them only the sum of 200 francs in notes, and a blank cheque (probably brought for the purpose of completing the sale of the imaginary "property"). But this meagre harvest did not trouble him to any great extent, because his main motive in committing the crime was to attempt to avail himself of the removal of Kinck to obtain from the latter's widow large sums of money, by means of forged letters purporting to come from Kinck himself.

His next move was to disturb the soft earth with his hands, he having no spade or other tool to assist him in the work. After toiling for a long time, he contrived to displace sufficient turf to bury the wretched victim in a very shallow grave.

Immediately after the crime, the scoundrel set to work to write the forged letters to Madame Kinck at Roubaix. But a terrible disappointment now awaited him. He received no reply to the various appeals for money which he had made in the name of his victim. At first he was unable to explain this mysterious silence. Eventually it occurred to him that there was the possibility that the family was growing suspicious

concerning the long absence of M. Kinck. If such was indeed the case, then the failure to respond to his appeals might perhaps be explained.

Suddenly he was seized with panic! The idea came to Troppman that he might be suspected of having caused Kinck to disappear. How was this suspicion, if indeed it took root in the minds of the family, to be rendered harmless to himself?

For some days he pondered the problem, and then he decided to do what the criminal invariably does in cases of the kind—he resolved to take the line of least resistance. He would remove any chance of suspicion by removing the suspecting persons—in other words, he would wipe out the whole family.

Deliberately and plausibly, Troppman then wrote a long letter to young Gustave Kinck, the eldest son. In that letter he said that he had met Gustave's father and that if the son would immediately travel to Paris (where Troppman was then staying), he would conduct the youth to his lodging, and the mysterious absence would then be fully explained. Gustave, an ingenuous young fellow, suspecting no evil, immediately came to Paris. Troppman received him with much geniality, gave him a good luncheon, and then asked the youth to accompany him to Vilette, a suburb of the city. In those remote days, Vilette was largely fields, deserted, of course, after the fall of dusk.

Troppman believed in swift action. Once having resolved on a crime, he lost no time in carrying it to its conclusion. The instant himself and his companion

had arrived in a very remote spot, the murderer leaped on the lad from behind and stabbed him several times. He then walked coolly away, returning late at night with a pick and shovel. The victim was hurriedly buried under the grass-grown turf.

The villain had not yet completed his work. He had resolved (as we have indicated) to remove the family, for if the mother and five children were permitted to remain, their anxiety concerning the mysterious evanishment of their relatives might prove a very dangerous thing for himself. With the supreme egotism of the born criminal—the egotism that recognizes no pity—and considers nothing on earth but self, self, self, all the time, he now decided that these six others must be sacrificed to his sense of security.

Once again he fell back on the art of the letter-writer. None knew better than Troppman how to frame plausible words, which by a skilful combination of sentiment and practicality would produce the effect which he desired. By means of a letter of this kind, he soon contrived to entice Madame Kinck and the children to Paris.

He received her with a geniality which was entirely sincere, for he was in a fever of delight at the prospect of realizing his aim. Having paid the woman a few desultory compliments on her appearance and the healthy looks of the children, he gaily suggested that she and two of the young people should at once accompany him to the place where M. Kinck was supposed to be staying, and that the three others should, for the moment, be left behind at the station. He went on to

add that when he had brought them to the apartment of her husband, he would return for the remaining children, but there would not be sufficient room in the cab for the entire party.

Madame Kinck agreed at once, probably so enchanted at the prospect of meeting her mysteriously absent husband that she did not wait to question the arrangement. The absence of Gustave, the eldest son, having been plausibly accounted for, she entered the cab. Within the space of one hour, herself and the three children had been brutally despatched and left in a field near Paris. The demoniacal villain then coolly returned to the station—fetched the three other children, took them in a cab to the same place, and destroyed them swiftly. In the bag, he had somehow contrived to secrete a small shovel and pick. With these tools he buried the victims in a shallow grave.

Now let us consider the facts! Troppman at this point had put an end to no less than EIGHT people, but had actually secured no material profit except 200 francs and a blank cheque! One must imagine that his emotions were gloomy enough, but it is possible that with the everlasting optimism of the professional criminal, he fancied that he was, at least, safe from detection.

His specious optimism, however, was hardly justified. For, just as he had been out of his reckoning when he had been stupid enough to imagine that Madame Kinck would be impressed by the forged letters, so was he utterly mistaken regarding his supposed immunity from danger.

For it happened that early one morning in the September of that year (1869), a young farmer named Langlois, whilst going to his work in the suburb of Pantin, near Paris, suddenly espied a handkerchief protruding from the grass. Stooping down to retrieve it, (for the French peasant rarely lets any unconsidered trifle escape him), he perceived that the earth had been disturbed. A moment later, the young man noticed with horror what appeared to him like a section of a human head! Overwhelmed with fear, he at once took to his heels and ran for the police. The latter bringing with them spades and picks, dug round the spot and presently unearthed the bodies of the woman and the five children. Shortly afterwards the bodies were identified.

Paris had now a new sensation. The Parisians love a mystery even more than we ourselves love it, for the Latin race has a highly developed sense of the dramatic and marvellous. In the beginning, suspicion actually attached itself to the missing M. Kinck and his son, and attempts (fruitless, of course) were made to ascertain their whereabouts.

Now it is possible, and even probable, that Troppman's appalling crimes might have gone unsolved to the end of time had not a person who called himself by the name of "Fisch" endeavoured to secure a passport from Havre to America by means of a forged document. He was immediately arrested on this comparatively trifling charge, and whilst he was on the way to the local Bureau of Police he made a determined attempt to drown himself by jumping into the harbour, fighting

like a madman with a young sailor who went in to rescue him. Eventually "Fisch" was conveyed to the hospital in Havre. His garments being searched, revealed a large quantity of papers bearing the name of the missing M. Kinck. The authorities immediately formed the very natural conclusion that the mysterious patient knew something of the evanishment of Kinck. For, in addition to the documents, two watches and other articles that had belonged to the Kinck family were found in his pockets.

Troppman, with his inveterate cunning and resourcefulness, pretended at first to have lost his wits. He played all kinds of grotesque tricks, dancing and singing ; turning somersaults and performing gyrations that might have led an innocent layman to believe that he was mad. But madness is not an easy thing to assume when trained doctors are watching the performance. The hospital physicians saw through his play-acting. When, at length, he realized that no longer could he sustain this illusion of half-wittedness, Troppman sullenly consented to make a sort of semi-confession. He said that he was willing to admit that he had been guilty of robbery, but not of murder. He added that killing, even the destruction of an insect, was abhorrent to him ! He alleged that the father and brother had destroyed the woman and the family—that he himself had been an unwilling and horrified witness of the crime, which he had been powerless to prevent. . . . More followed to the same effect, and the story was told with his usual plausibility and gusto.

However, if the criminal held any sanguine hopes that this absurd story would be credited by the authorities, those hopes were soon dispelled. For, on the 25th September, the body of young Gustave Kinck was discovered by villagers, attracted to the spot by the loud barking of a dog who had displaced the surface of the earth. Troppman was now clearly shown to be a thief and a liar. There was strong presumptive evidence that he was a murderer as well.

The boy-monster, who appeared entirely unmoved by his perilous position, was then conveyed from Havre to Paris under a very strong escort. He was taken to the Morgue, the famous Paris mortuary (which until a few years ago was open to the public, and was the resort of all the morbid-minded tourists in Europe), and was then subjected to a process which the French police authorities have sometimes found effective and swift in extracting a confession of guilt. Our own less theatrically-minded authorities would not tolerate the process for a moment. It consists in the confronting of the alleged murderer with his victim, in order that the sudden encounter may so react upon the culprit's emotions that he is constrained to reveal all that has happened.

Troppman stood the test admirably. Unabashed, he smilingly identified the seven persons, admitted that he had known all of them, but insisted on adhering to his original story.

A few weeks later there happened one of those astounding impulses that come to many men and women, but

more frequently to the ill-balanced brain of the criminal. For quite suddenly Troppman broke down. He told a warder that he had a communication which he wished to make to the Governor of the prison. When the official arrived in the cell, expecting to be greeted with some absurd revelation, or a further protestation of innocence, he found the prisoner in tears. Troppman then confessed that he had killed the entire family of M. Kinck. He proceeded to give very clear and detailed directions concerning the crimes, and indicated the spot where he had killed and buried the first victim, who still remained undiscovered. Guided by these directions, the police had little difficulty in unearthing the body of M. Kinck near the ruins of the Castle of Herinfluck.

The last scene (but one) of this sordid series of tragedies was enacted on December 28th, 1869, in the Assize Court of Paris. The Court on that occasion was packed with celebrated personages of all classes and professions, including Victorien Sardou, the dramatist, and Turgenieff, the novelist. Turgenieff, at a later time, described the trial in a chapter of one of his novels. The description is perhaps one of the most vivid pieces of word-painting in fiction.

M. Lachaud, Troppman's counsel, realizing that he had what was practically no case, seeing that the accused had made a confession, did what counsel frequently do in cases of the kind. He fell back on the specious plea of insanity. And here it may be interesting to point out (roughly) how the criminal law distinguishes

between sanity and insanity for the purposes of jurisprudence.

It is held by the majority of the authorities that if a man is able to carry on the ordinary business of life without arousing comment—if he can buy and sell, talk normally with acquaintances, interest himself in the ordinary diversions of life, and to show the usual self-control in every-day circumstances, then that man is sane enough to be convicted of an offence and to suffer the penalty. Exceptional cases may arise where a person suffering from occasional breakdowns (such as epileptic attacks), but who is normal enough at other times, may perhaps be allowed to put forward successfully the plea of insanity. But great care has to be taken in such cases, and in this country Judges (very properly) are loath to accept the plea of madness unless there is uncontrovertible evidence in that direction.

Lachaud, as we have said, put forward this defence. Moreover, he endeavoured (very skilfully) to make the jury believe that the prisoner in the dock had been largely influenced by certain accomplices whose names were not known. It was hardly probable, suggested M. Lachaud, that a youth, little more than a boy in years, could actually plan a series of horrible crimes entirely on his own initiative.

The efforts of the counsel, brilliant, dramatic, plausible, failed to convince the jury. The evidence spoke for itself—it was cumulative and final. Moreover, there was the fact that Troppman had made a definite



JEAN B. TROPPEMAN

confession. All the eloquence in France could not shatter that truth.

The trial ran its course for two days. It was the talk of Paris. Wherever men and women met, they did not speak of dinners, of plays, of politics. The word "Troppman" held the high place. The "gamins" in the street, quarrelling after the fashion of boys whether in Paris, London, or Tokyo, hurled the epithet "Troppman" at each other. The wretched little criminal—stunted, dwarfish—was dominating the gayest city in Europe for at least two days! On the evening of the second day, the newspaper kiosks on the boulevards flamed with announcements telling the people of Paris that Troppman had been found guilty and had been sentenced to death!

For several days after the conclusion of the trial which he had endured with extraordinary coolness, he was cheerful enough. He joked at times with his attendant warders, played cards, and smoked incessantly. In the intervals of card-playing he wrote many letters to important personages begging that his case might be reconsidered. One of these letters was addressed to the late Empress Eugénie!

It is the custom in France to keep a condemned prisoner in ignorance of the date of his exit from the world. The French authorities, who pride themselves on their sympathetic psychology, hold the view that this method is more merciful than our own. Therefore did it come about that on the night of the 18th January,

1870, the wretched youth went to bed, not dreaming that before a few hours had passed, he would be led out to the guillotine.

In the hard cheerless light of an early winter morning, they came for him, those quiet men who carry out their work with mechanical precision—they told him that the moment had arrived. . . . At the last, this amazing criminal showed a fine spirit. It is said that so far from having to be dragged out, he actually “raced” from the cell, and even attempted to assist the executioners when they were getting ready to bind him. He walked to the guillotine like a man “hastening to dinner,” but shuddered when he saw the red frame and the knife. He was hurried on to the machine—the blade fell—and human justice had said its last word to Jean Baptiste Troppman !

That Troppman belonged to the category of the “born criminal” there can be little doubt. In the case of this man there was no gradual lapse into crime through evil friends and environment, through desperate poverty and necessity. He deliberately set out to kill in order that he might lead a lazy life ; he did not know the meaning of pity. He saw his objective and he went for it, utterly indifferent to the sorrow and the destruction that attended his progress. The professional criminal knows one sort of pity only—and that is pity for himself.

MARIN AND GABRIELLE FENAYROU

THE STORY OF A HUSBAND AND WIFE WHO PLANNED A
DIABOLICAL MURDER

CRIMINAL history unfortunately affords many records of wives who have planned and carried out the destruction of their husbands, but it holds few cases of women who, aided by their husbands, have killed their lovers. Here is the story of such a crime—the scene of which was Paris, the period, the early 'eighties of the nineteenth century.

In 1870, Marin Fenayrou, a young druggist, had secured a post as assistant to a chemist in a semi-fashionable district of Paris. After a time, Fenayrou fascinated the daughter of his employer, and eventually married the girl. On the death of her father, the business passed to Fenayrou and his wife.

Now this Marin Fenayrou was an egotist, a gambler, above all, a man who loathed work. The criminal is frequently a combination of these three tendencies. After a time he began to neglect his young wife who had soon tired of his specious fascinations. Gabrielle was a sentimental person, fond of erotic novels, fond of posing, and fancying herself the heroine of the fictions over which she pored.

It will be obvious that such a household was ripe for some disaster. Very soon that disaster came, and it arrived in the person of Louis Aubert, a good-looking youth of twenty-one, who, in 1875, joined Fenayrou as an assistant in the druggist store.

Aubert was what is called a "lady-killer"—a heartless

young scoundrel whose chief delight was to make love to any pretty woman and then ride away. . . . Very soon he was devoting himself to Gabrielle, who regarding herself as a neglected wife, and despising her husband for his lack of refinement, was only too ready to smile upon the new admirer.

Two children had been born to the young couple, and to these children Gabrielle was sincerely devoted. Nevertheless, she had no hesitation in surrendering herself to Aubert; and for four years he lived with the family, posing as the friend of his employer, petting his children, and at the same time making love to his wife!

In 1880 there was a break in the relations between Aubert and his employer. They quarrelled over some matter of business, and Aubert quitted the shop, setting up a druggist's store in the Latin Quarter.

Aubert, clever in his work, made a swift success. In the meantime Fenayrou's business was falling on bad times—his laziness and gambling tendencies causing him to neglect his customers. In 1881 he was forced to sell his business and to move with his family to a poorer section of the city. He now dabbled in finance of a shady character, and was sent to prison for three months for selling a spurious mineral water.

Gabrielle did not resent the loss of her lover. Perhaps she had already wearied of him. Very soon she had yielded to the allurements of another man—a sporting journalist. She was incapable of enduring affection—and was perhaps as shallow and insincere a woman as ever played a part in serious crime.

It was not until March 1882 that Fenayrou taxed his wife with her infidelity in connection with Louis Aubert. Why he delayed this action to so late a period, one cannot say with any certainty. It is possible, however, that he had suspected the intimacy long since, but did not resent it with any fervour until jealousy of his rival's business prosperity, as it contrasted with his own failures, egged him to emotions of hatred.

There was a terrible scene! He denounced her with demoniacal fury, swearing he would kill her unless she solemnly promised to aid him in taking vengeance on her former lover.

Gabrielle, true to the criminal tradition, was ready to take the way of least resistance. The criminal, invertebrate, lazy, fond of ease, hates the contemplation of difficulties. Gabrielle, therefore, was prepared to aid her husband in murder rather than incur the vexation of thwarting his wishes.

The next move of Fenayrou was to go to the headquarters of the Paris police and ask the authorities to recover from Aubert certain letters which Madame had written to that person. The police, of course, refused. It was none of their business, they pointed out, but at a later time, his request proved a very essential factor in associating him with the crime that followed. . . .

Never did author sit down to plan his story of crime work more deliberately—more coldly than this husband and wife. The details were discussed as calmly as the details of a dinner—and eventually the diabolical scheme took shape.

Fenayrou went over to Chatou, a pleasant resort for Parisians, situated about ten miles from Paris. He hired a villa in that suburb and paid a quarter's rent in advance. This done, he took into his confidence his young brother Lucien, and asked for his assistance in the proposed murder. Lucien, a warm-hearted youth, believing that he was called upon to aid in an act of righteous vengeance, and influenced by the pleading of his brother, at last consented to take part in the horrible business.

The evening of May 18th, 1882, was chosen for the committal of the crime. There was an excellent reason for this choice. The day was a public holiday—Chatou would be packed with people, careless, joyous revellers. Among the press of many foot-passengers, the three visitors to the villa would pass unnoticed.

The method of the destruction of the wretched young Aubert was then discussed. Fenayrou suggested several fantastic devices. One of them was to take the form of a pair of specially designed opera-glasses that would blind the man as he put them to his eyes, and then kill him by causing a blade to enter his brain! Another half-insane suggestion was a wolf-trap that would inflict great suffering before it despatched its victim. At length, these imaginative devices were abandoned, and it was decided that he should be stunned, and afterwards stabbed with a sword-stick.

All went with perfect smoothness for the conspirators. On the afternoon of the 18th, the trio went down to the

villa, Penayrou taking with him a length of gas-piping and a small goat-chaise. The piping was destined to weight the body before it was flung into the river—the chaise was to convey it to the bridge.

The question previously had arisen—how was Aubert to be brought to the villa? Gabrielle had solved the difficulty by writing him a letter, in which she said that her passion for him had returned—that she could not live without his love. She begged him to meet her secretly and to come with her to Chatou, where she had found a place in which they could be happy together without occasioning scandal. Aubert had fallen into the trap. He had replied at once, and an appointment had been made for the evening of the 18th at the St. Lazare Station in Paris.

At 8.30 on that evening Gabrielle bought a ticket for herself and for Aubert, the man's penurious habits causing her to do this rather than risk a breakdown by reason of his objecting to the outlay. The two then travelled to Chatou, and on the way she joked and chatted with a callousness which seems amazing in view of her subsequent conduct.

When they arrived at the villa it was pitch dark. Aubert, with a joke on his lips, fumbled for a match as they entered the passage that led to the dining-room. Before he could strike the match, Fenayrou pounced on the wretched man, and struck him heavily on the head with a big hammer. Aubert struggled furiously and might have overpowered the older and feebler man

had not Gabrielle come to her husband's aid, holding the victim by the shoulders, whilst Fenayrou despatched him with a sword-stick. Lucien, the young brother, took no part in the actual killing—his assistance was required at a later hour for the disposal of the body.

The three people then sat down to wait for midnight and the emptying of the streets. Soon after that hour, they placed the dead man in the chaise covered with a rug. If any passer-by espied the chaise, he would simply imagine that it contained a child, whose parents were going home after the fête.

All went well according to plan. The gas-piping was attached to the dead man, and the river received him. The guilty trio then went to a café, had several drinks, and returned to Paris.

They told themselves that they had destroyed all traces of their visit. The villa had been taken in an assumed name. Aubert (they knew) had mentioned to no person the reason of his visit to Chatou. But they had overlooked a certain possibility, and very soon that possibility materialized into a damning piece of evidence! They had forgotten the *request to the police for the return of Aubert's letters!*

Chance now took a hand in the game. By some strange movement in the water, the heavy gas-piping became detached from the body, and it rose to the surface. Very speedily it was identified, and the injuries it bore proved unquestionably that the unhappy man had been killed by violence.

M. Macé, that brilliant official who afterwards rose to high eminence in the French Secret Police, at once associated the finding of Aubert's body with the request made by Fenayrou for the recovery of the letters. Macé was a man who owed a great deal of his success to intuition. Where a less gifted detective might have searched many weeks for a clue, Macé, by means of this intuition, was enabled to hit upon a clue immediately. He went without hesitation to the house of Fenayrou and questioned husband and wife as to their whereabouts on the evening of the crime. The man who had leased the villa to Fenayrou was summoned, and identified the latter as the person to whom he had let the house.

Husband and wife put up an instant denial, but Macé was unconvinced. He caused both of them to be arrested, and within a few hours Lucien was also behind prison bars.

On the way to the jail at Versailles, Gabrielle appears to have been seized by a sudden panic. She was seated with Macé in the train. After some desultory talk, the other passengers alighted. Perceiving that she was now alone with the detective, the woman made a full confession. "I am sick of lies and deceit," she said passionately. "I will tell you everything." She then proceeded to relate the details of the crime, saying that Aubert had deserved his fate and that the vengeance was justified.

Fenayrou himself refused to admit his guilt until he was taken to the villa and confronted with the scene of

the tragedy. Then, he, too, broke down, admitted what he had done, and actually rehearsed every detail of the crime, showing how he had killed Aubert and how he had placed him in the chaise !

The extraordinary action of Gabrielle in suddenly confessing her share in the shocking business is not easy to explain. One can, perhaps, only put forward the theory that she was a woman of ill-balanced and hysterical temperament. The shock of the arrest may have thrown her off her equilibrium. Faced with the possibility of having to invent myriads of lies, with the ordeal of a long and torturing cross-examination, she may have chosen the way of confession as the easiest way out of the maze.

The case had aroused enormous excitement in sensation-loving Paris, and the Assize Court at Versailles was uncomfortably crowded on August 19th, 1882, when the three accused persons faced their trial.

Each prisoner behaved characteristically in the dock. Fenayrou posed as the injured husband—a man who seemed to demand sympathy rather than punishment. Gabrielle was proud, self-contained, perhaps rather satisfied with the dramatic rôle which she was now playing, whilst young Lucien was in a state of despair, crying bitterly at certain parts of the proceedings.

In France, the plea of a husband who kills to avenge his honour, has frequently been accepted by emotional juries. That plea was, of course, put forward by the defence. But the Judge refused to accept it in its

entirety. The prosecuting counsel, moreover, suggested that there was another motive—perhaps the desire to shut the lips of Aubert concerning some sinister proceeding on the part of Fenayrou. The request for the return of the letters, said the counsel, seemed to point to a suspicion of that kind. A man would hardly consort with his wife in a crime of this kind merely to avenge an injury to his honour, but the two might easily plan such a deed if their safety and freedom were concerned.

For the defence of Gabrielle it was suggested that she had repented her betrayal of her husband, and was anxious to avenge the wrong that Aubert had done to him. The plea was coldly received by Judge and jury. Finally, it was stated on behalf of Lucien that he was young—did not realize what he was doing and was genuinely anxious to stand by his brother and his sister-in-law.

Optimism was the keynote of the emotions of Fenayrou and his wife during the trial. They felt certain that they would be acquitted—that the jury would never bring itself to condemn to the guillotine a husband and wife who had wiped out a treacherous and immoral deed by an act of vengeance. . . . The two chatted in whispers at intervals—encouraging each other with jests and comments on the people in Court. It was a strange picture this—a picture of husband and wife who for many months had been open foes, now reconciled and rendered comrades by the common danger of both.

There were the usual impassioned outbursts on the part of counsel—outbursts which would shock the feelings of persons accustomed to the cooler and less emotional methods of our own legal officers. The Public Prosecutor foamed with righteous indignation. He summoned his most lurid adjectives to describe the prisoners. Speaking of Gabrielle, he said : “ Never has a more hideous monster of crime been seated in a court of justice. She is a personification of falsehood, cowardice, and treachery ! ”

On the other hand, the counsel for the defence became almost lachrymose in his plea for the female prisoner. “ Think of her wrongs ! ” he cried. “ Regard her as a weak trusting woman, who erred and was stricken with remorse, rather than as a cold-blooded criminal who was ready to plot a crime. She is a woman always ready to yield to the nearest influence—first to the seductions of Aubert and later to the threats of her husband. Moreover, she is no subtle artful plotter—does not the fact that she confessed the crime almost immediately after the arrest seem to prove that she was ready to make atonement ? ” And so on, and so on, until it is possible that Gabrielle herself came to regard her crime as the crime of one more sinned against than sinning.

The trial wore to its end, but long before its conclusion the spectators were convinced that there would be a full acquittal, or at least a conviction with “ extenuating circumstances,” which would possibly mean comparatively short sentences of imprisonment. The Judge in his summing-up, however, rather discouraged this

probability, and when the jury retired to ponder their verdict, the suspense and excitement reached a feverish point. . . .

The verdict, when at last it came, must have overwhelmed the three wretched people in the dock. For all three were found guilty of murder, and the jury saw no reason to ask for clemency on the ground of "extenuating circumstances."

Marin Fenayrou was sentenced to death. Gabrielle was to go penal servitude for life. Lucien by reason of his youth, was ordered the comparatively mild punishment of seven years in prison.

Fenayrou was more overcome by the verdict than was his wife. This extraordinary woman, a creature of emotion, who was able to cry bitterly over the woes of a penny novelette heroine—listened to the condemnation of her husband to the knife and herself to a fate which some have regarded as more harsh than death—with a smile upon her face. As for Lucien, he was in a state of collapse, and perhaps hardly realized that the sentence had been pronounced.

But this was not the end! A tremendous surprise awaited two actors in the terrible drama. For when the case came before the Court of Cassation (a tribunal akin in some respects to our own Court of Criminal Appeal), the verdict was quashed on a technical point. Certain evidence had been taken in writing and not by mouth—and on that ground a new trial was ordered.

The trial followed shortly afterwards. The sentence

on Marin Fenayrou was reduced to penal servitude for life—and the youth Lucien was discharged! Gabrielle was the sole member of the guilty trio who did not gain benefit from the readjustment. Her sentence of life-long imprisonment remained fixed.

The man passed in due time from the living world to the horrors of New Caledonia, a penal settlement whose rigours in those days recalled the crude brutalities of the British penal settlements a hundred years ago. Gabrielle was sent to a convict prison in France. She distinguished herself by good conduct, and eventually was given a post of responsibility in the gaol. Marin died in New Caledonia of an internal disease.

So ends this strange eventful history of a crime that startled France nearly fifty years ago. The main facts of the terrible business are clear—but one mystery has remained unsolved. What was the contents of those letters that indirectly brought about the arrest of the three criminals? That some sinister secret was hidden there, we may feel tolerably certain, for otherwise there could hardly have been so keen a desire for their recovery. That secret was not revealed at the trial, and it lies under the dust of years—the dust that covers countless other dark places associated with the crime and the criminal.

A "FIN-DE-SIECLE" MYSTERY OF PARIS

THE CASE OF MICHAEL EYRAUD AND GABRIELLE BOMPARD,
WHO PLANNED THE DETAILS OF A MURDER BY
HANGING.

OUT of the long, long catalogue of coldly planned crimes, there stands with a certain sordid distinction the case of a middle-aged Frenchman and a young Frenchwoman—a case that mystified half Europe and America in the early years of the last decade of the nineteenth century. It may be said at once that the method of the disposal of the victim was commonplace enough—it was the method of destruction that lent an intriguing and vivid interest to the terrible business.

On a certain Friday, the 27th July, 1889, M. Gouffé, a Parisian bailiff, vanished suddenly from the eyes of men. Frequently he had large sums on his person—it was his custom ordinarily to take these home with him and lock them in his safe. But on Friday nights, this bailiff (a man of questionable pleasures) was in the habit of frequenting houses of vicious reputation. For that reason he would leave the cash at his office.

Now, on the same night the hall porter at the offices had heard someone go up the stairs to the office of M. Gouffé, but imagining that the visitor was Gouffé himself, the porter had not taken the trouble to inspect the man. At a later stage it was distinctly proved that this unseen visitor was the murderer, Michael Eyraud.

Paris was thrown into an orgy of excitement by the sudden evanishment of Gouffé. All sorts of fantastic

theories were put forward to explain his disappearance. It was not until August 13th (nearly three weeks later), that a body, which was afterwards identified as the remains of the wretched bailiff, was discovered in a thicket in a wood in the little town of Millery near Lyons. At the time of the discovery the body was too much decomposed to be identified by any facial evidence. Two days afterwards, broken fragments of a travelling trunk were found near the town. The lock was fitted by a key that had been picked up near the body. The railway authorities got to work, and soon ascertained that one day after the mysterious evanishment of Gouffé, a trunk that answered to the description of the box found near Millery had been despatched from Paris to Lyons.

M. Goron, Chief of Police (a very remarkable person), took up the case. With the intuitive gift of the born detective, he had at once formed the theory that the dead man was M. Gouffé. A medical examination that revealed certain physical peculiarities (an injury to the right ankle—the absence of an eye-tooth, etc.) proved beyond doubt that the theory was entirely correct.

Four months went by. Not a vestige of a clue had arisen. Then chance took a hand in the affair, for it happened that whilst M. Goron was examining a witness in another case, the latter remarked casually that he had known a certain Michael Eyraud, a hard-up vagabondish fellow, who had vanished from Paris at precisely the SAME moment that had witnessed the disappearance of the bailiff.

Once again the intuitive mind of the famous Chief



MICHAEL EYRAUD

of Police, worked a sort of deductive miracle. For, instantly he conceived the notion that Eyraud might have played a part in the terrible affair. He got to work and presently secured a species of "dossier" of the missing Eyraud. He ascertained that the latter had been an employé of a bankrupt firm—and that he had abruptly left Paris at the end of July, taking with him a young woman of loose character known as Gabrielle Bompard.

The venue of the hunt then turned toward England, and London took a hand in the chase. The family of the dead man had offered a reward for the identification of the trunk. A Euston Road trunk dealer, having read the description of the box, wrote to the authorities in Paris, saying that he fancied he recognized the trunk as one which he had sold a few months previously. The box, which had been skilfully reconstructed from its fragments found in the wood, was immediately sent to London and was promptly identified by the shopkeeper. At a later stage, the proprietor of a boarding-house in Gower Street (close to Euston Road), where Eyraud and Gabrielle had stayed, also recognized the box. Indeed, the woman of the house had jokingly remarked to Gabrielle that it was a very large receptacle to contain merely one dress, whereupon the girl had replied with a laugh that there "would be plenty to put in it" when it arrived in Paris! That she could jest about the horrible purpose for which the trunk was designed throws a lurid light on her character.

The boarding-house keeper (who fortunately had a

good memory), moreover, recalled that the young woman went away with the trunk on the 17th July, returning on the 17th August. Three days later the man and woman left together for Paris. It is clear that Gabrielle conveyed the trunk to her apartment in Paris in readiness for a carefully planned crime.

It was now fairly evident that Michael Eyraud and his girl companion had been concerned in the destruction of M. Gouffé, but their detection still remained an elusive, far-off thing. Strangely enough, the first clue to the whereabouts of the guilty partners came from the man Eyraud himself. Why he wrote the letter, only the most subtle of crime psychologists can explain, and even he might here find himself at a loss. For the man actually wrote from New York to the Chief of the Parisian Police—saying that he had read of the suspicions that had attached to himself and that he was astounded, horrified, perplexed. He admitted that he had known Gouffé, but added that he was an excellent friend whom he would not have dreamed of injuring. He went on to say that he had left France for one reason only—to escape certain creditors who were becoming too pressing. Gabrielle, who had accompanied him, had now gone to enjoy the companionship of another man. He described the girl as a “vile person”—hinting that she, and not he, had been responsible for the crime. He added that if news came to him that she had returned to Paris, he would immediately leave America and place himself unreservedly at the disposal

of the authorities to give them any information within his knowledge.

There followed soon afterwards another almost incredible episode. For Gabrielle Bompard herself went to the Prefecture of Police, saying that she desired to set matters right by a complete explanation of what had happened on the night of the 27th July. Then, coolly swinging her legs as she lounged on a table in the private office of the Chief, she vowed solemnly that Michael Eyraud had planned and committed the murder, and had told her some of the details, but that she herself had had no part in it and could not be held responsible.

Why she took this rash course our friends the psychologists must try and explain. For she had thrust her head into the lion's jaws, and within five minutes of her confession the young woman was under arrest. The only explanation that occurs to the writer in connection with the letter of Eyraud and the confession of Gabrielle is this (and he offers it subject to expert psychological criticism), that the criminal brain is frequently absurdly, wildly sanguine. It relies on bluff. It is perhaps conceivable that both criminals, realizing that they might be accused at any moment, imagined foolishly that they might defeat justice by making bogus admissions.

Immediately after the arrest of the girl, French detectives travelled through America and Canada on the track of the man Eyraud. They certainly covered the trail quite successfully up to a point, for wherever the

scoundrel had penetrated, he had left behind him debts and victims of frauds. It was one of his minor frauds (the theft of a rich Oriental robe) that ultimately led to his identification and arrest.

At the end of March, 1890, the detectives were beginning to believe that they were baffled, but at that point chance came to their aid, as it has frequently come in other mysteries of crime. For it happened that Eyraud, having fled to Havana, found himself one day very hard-up, whilst living in the city of Cuba. At his wits' ends for money, he went to a second-hand wardrobe dealer in that place and asked her to buy the robe to which we have referred. The woman, struck by the richness of the robe as it contrasted with the rags of the would-be seller, went to the office of the French Consul. She pointed out to him that she, having read in a French newspaper of the theft of a certain Eastern robe by Eyraud, had formed the idea that in all probability Eyraud and her potential customer were identical persons.

Now it happened that the Consul, a very acute official, was aware that a former friend of Eyraud, who had intimately known the latter in Paris, was now living in Cuba. He sent for the man and questioned him, but nothing came of the interview. By an extraordinary coincidence, the man actually walked into Eyraud five minutes later in the street outside the office !

Eyraud, thus encountered and scenting peril, flung himself upon the mercy of his old acquaintance. He took him to a café, gave him drinks, and begged him with

tears in his eyes to keep the meeting a secret. Evidently the friend was won over, for he took no action. However, the long rope of Eyraud's freedom was running out at last, for he was captured that same night as he wandered miserably through the streets, afraid to go to the Hotel Roma (where he had been staying) for fear of arrest.

Pacing the streets towards the early hours of morning, he did a strange thing. For, on being questioned by a Spanish policeman as to who he was and what he was doing at that hour, he replied at once that his name was Gorski and that his residence was the Hotel Roma. Why he gave away this most damning information, one cannot imagine, unless one supposes that he had been drinking heavily and scarcely knew what he was saying. It was a fact well known to the police that Eyraud had frequently called himself by the name of "Gorski."

Eyraud had betrayed himself. But for that chance meeting with the gendarme—that chance reference to his assumed name—all might have been well for him. In the event, the gendarme summoned assistance and arrested him on the spot. Later, his luggage at the hotel was subjected to a rigid search, and thereupon, any doubt concerning the identity of "Gorski" and the man wanted by the French police for murder, was removed.

After that incident, things moved swiftly. The French authorities immediately applied for an order of extradition. After certain formalities, Eyraud was taken back to France. Subsequently the man was confronted with his accomplice, and terrible scenes followed. There

were curses, threats ; the two would have pounced on each other had not a strong guard stood between them. Each denounced the other, each was ready to betray half the truth—the half that would not bring about reprisals on the individual concerned.

At length, slowly but inevitably, out of a lurid chaos of falsehoods, inventions, and evasions, the truth concerning the crime of the night of Friday, the 27th July, 1889, emerged in all its horror. Here is the story :

Eyraud, desperately hard up, and therefore unable to satisfy even partially the exorbitant demands of the young woman with whom he was associated, at length turned his thoughts towards deliberate murder as the easiest means of raising money. He knew the man Gouffé—knew, moreover, the habits of his life. He realized that with the aid of the woman, he would experience no difficulty in causing Gouffé to come to any rendezvous that she might appoint.

And so the trap was baited and laid. On the Friday in question, all was in perfect order for the carrying out of the horrible business. The trunk purchased in London had been deposited in Gabrielle's flat in the Rue Tronson-Decouvray. Close to the bed there was a huge beam in the ceiling of the room. To this beam, Eyraud had attached a thin rope. The purpose of that rope will be explained later.

Everything went according to plan. Gouffé, the licentious pleasure-lover, always ready for an amorous adventure, was waylaid by Gabrielle as he quitted his

office. After a few remarks had been exchanged Gouffé, who was fascinated by the young woman's charm and appearance, consented to visit her that same evening.

Previous to his arrival at the flat, Eyraud had secreted himself behind certain heavy plush curtains on the sofa. The rope that hung from the ceiling-beam was also hidden behind those curtains. It will be clear, therefore, that every detail had been arranged—nothing had been left to chance. Perhaps few murders have been thought out with such meticulous attention to the smallest trifle.

The night came, and with it came the doomed man. The bailiff was in jovial spirits—had brought with him wine and delicacies procured from a neighbouring shop. Evidently he was looking forward to a merry evening. . . .

Gabrielle received him with a jest on her lips. In answer to his enquiry concerning Eyraud (whose friendship with the girl was well known to the bailiff), she replied laughingly that they had quarrelled—that it was not probable that she would see him again, and that she was quite ready to transfer her affections to her present companion. Gouffé, with the self-satisfied vanity of the middle-aged Lothario, was overjoyed. Then there followed the usual endearments, and presently Gabrielle sat upon his knee.

The moment had now arrived. Eyraud behind the heavy curtains had his hand on the long rope. Presently, Gabrielle laughingly unfastened the tassel of her dressing-gown, and with a playful gesture, whispering

loving words, slipped it round the neck of Gouffé in the form of a noose. Instantly Eyraud caught the tassel and tied it to the end of the rope.

A kiss was to be the signal for the execution. Bending towards the victim, the treacherous woman set her lips upon the mouth of Gouffé, and as she did this, Eyraud suddenly hauled on the rope. The bailiff tried to cry out, but his cries were stifled by the suffocating pressure on his neck. In less than three minutes, the man was dead!

The instant the unfortunate bailiff had ceased to breathe, Eyraud robbed him of the contents of his pockets. Having secured the small sum of money that he had carried on his person, Eyraud then took the keys of the office and immediately went there, intending to rob the safe. In his excitement, however, he actually failed to discover the 15,000 francs which Gouffé had deposited there. The notes were hidden by certain papers which appeared unimportant, and Eyraud therefore came away bare of the booty for which he and his accomplice had planned the crime. It was this midnight visit that the hall porter had overheard, but had imagined (as we have said), to be the visit of the man Gouffé himself.

It must be a tragic moment in the life of the criminal when he discovers that the price of his crime is suddenly snatched from his grasp. Perhaps only a Dante or a Shakespeare could describe for us the emotions of the man and woman when Eyraud came back to the room



GABRIELLE BOMPARD

and told his story of failure. One can imagine her hurling bitter curses upon him—one can imagine him retaliating with blows.

But there was little time for mutual recriminations. It was necessary that the crime should be covered up as speedily as possible. That same night, Eyraud stripped the victim and placed the body in the trunk. The next move of the guilty partners took them to Lyons. Whilst on the way to that city, they quitted the train and deposited the body in the thicket near Millery, where it was afterwards found. They had previously removed the corpse from the trunk, believing that the removal would render identification more difficult. The trunk itself they smashed to fragments with a hammer and chisel brought for the purpose, scattering the pieces as we have already described.

The facts that have been set out in the preceding lines were slowly dragged out of both criminals under examination by the police. Each admitted knowledge of the crime; each flung the burden of guilt upon the other. Eyraud swore from first to last he had been obsessed and dominated by Gabrielle—that he scarcely knew what he did, so intense was his passion for the girl. On the other hand, Gabrielle protested that Eyraud was a hypnotist (how the French love this plea of hypnotism), and that she had acted throughout under that sinister power.

A cynic present at an examination of this kind might well have asked himself of what worth was a “love” such as the love between this man and this woman.

Here were two people who had been apparently everything to each other for many months—who had passed days and nights in passionate communion—who, yet, at the first sign of danger were ready to denounce each other in order to gain individual safety !

On the 16th December, 1890, the two criminals stood in the dock of the Paris Assize Court. The trial that followed was not conducted in the decorous manner of the British Courts, where a sort of severe kindness prevails throughout. The trial of Eyraud and Gabrielle Bompard was interlarded with cries, hysterical outbursts, sobs, entreaties, denunciations, threats.

It wore its way at length to the finish. Elaborate speeches for the defence were made in the case of each prisoner, and in each case the line taken by counsel was the line suggested by the accused during their examination at the Police Bureau. The guilt was admitted, but it was guilt due to undue influence.

An impassioned speech was made by Gabrielle's counsel. Gallic eloquence is frequently at its highest point when a woman is concerned. The counsel represented her as an emotional young woman at the mercy of her lover who was undoubtedly a clever and unscrupulous hypnotist. He showed how the record of Eyraud had been wholly evil from beginning to end—how he had boasted that he never worked if he could avoid work—and how his career had been marked throughout by swindling, lying, treachery.

Eyraud's counsel also pleaded with great ingenuity and rhetoric. He appealed to the average French

juryman's love of romance. Here was a man, said counsel, who was ready to make any sacrifice, to incur any danger, to risk even the guillotine, in order to retain the affections of a woman with whom he was passionately in love. More followed to this effect, and the counsel came near to shedding tears as he lingered upon the wrongs of his greatly "misunderstood" client.

However, the jury, although Parisian and emotional, was on this occasion sensible enough to get the facts in their right focus and ignore the absurd rhetoric. At the end of the trial that stretched over a space of four days, it found both prisoners guilty of wilful murder. The man was sentenced to death, the woman to twenty years in a convict-prison.

The behaviour of Michael Eyraud after his sentence was contradictory in its developments. His first attitude—an attitude that endured for two or three days, was one of resignation. Later, however, he revolted against this submissive attitude and became very aggressive. He stormed and raged, saying that the sentence was a crime, that the jury had been misled. He addressed an appeal to the Court of Cassation, but the Judges there found no reason to interfere with the sentence. Eyraud then made a last desperate application to the President of the Republic, the wise and excellent M. Carnot, who soon afterwards himself met a tragic end at the hands of a political assassin. M. Carnot very properly upheld the decisions of the other Courts.

And now Eyraud, realizing that he must face the inevitable, proceeded to do so with a certain stoicism that undoubtedly did him credit.

On a very cold, grey morning, the 3rd of February, 1891, the Governor of the prison of La Roquette entered the cell of the condemned man at an early hour. Speaking in a voice that he could hardly control (for prison officials dread these ceremonies almost as deeply as the criminals themselves), he told the wretched man that he was to get up and prepare for the end. Eyraud rose quietly, made a rough toilet, and having listened for a few minutes to the words of the priest set out for the guillotine.

The great crowd that had assembled to see him die contented itself with murmurs. It broke into no hysteria of abuse or excitement. Eyraud calmly looked at the people and then at the knife. His last words as they strapped him to the board were words of hate. For he uttered curses on a certain Minister of the Interior, M. Constans, who had somehow incurred his dislike. The knife fell, and with its fall there came down the curtain on one of the most revolting and deliberately planned crimes in the long calendar of criminal records.

The moralist dealing with this case would perhaps say that the wages of sin is death, and that if Eyraud had not carried on an intimacy of an immoral kind with Gabrielle Bompard he might have gone his way in peace and died in bed ! Hardly ! The meeting with Bompard was only an episode. We must conclude that if there

had been no woman, he would have found some other source of extravagance, and that his love of food, of drink, and the easy ways of life would have forced him into crime and probably into murder. Character, not circumstance, spins the plot.

HENRI DESIRÉ LANDRU

A MASS-MURDERER OF THE WAR PERIOD, WHO MURDERED
MANY WOMEN FOR A SMALL PROFIT

IF ever newspapers are brought to the tribunal of a last judgment, a heavy indictment might lie against those journals that have given opportunities to the matrimonial advertiser. But for the convenience and ease by which women may thus be obtained in marriage, many swindlers, blackmailers, and murderers would have had to pause and wait before securing their victims, and the delay might have saved the pockets and the lives of many foolish and unsuspecting women.

One has merely to study the record of the man who has murdered women *en masse* under pretence of seeking them in marriage, to elicit the fact that the matrimonial advertisement column formed the means of introduction. Occasionally, it is true, a stray victim may be found in the streets, in the restaurants, or in the shops, but the matrimonial advertisement is the chief purveyor of the victims of women-exploiters.

Had Henri Desiré Landru lived in a country where newspaper advertisements had not been available, it is conceivable that he would have had more failures than successes in his career of swindle and murder. But he realized that the woman who is desperately anxious to be married, but who has no friends, no relatives, is forced back upon the sordid ways of advertisement.

The advertiser has an advantage over the man who picks up acquaintances in the streets, in that he can

formulate an attractive picture of himself. If the reality does not compare well with the picture, then he can, to some extent, make up for the deficiency by a plausibility of speech and manner. Moreover, a sense of security is (absurdly enough) sometimes conveyed to foolish people by an advertisement—a security absent from the free-and-easy abruptness of a street encounter.

Landru was the most plausible—the most ingenious of advertisers. He baited his trap with brilliance and with precision. Sometimes he posed as a merchant, sometimes as an engineer, sometimes as a chemist, sometimes as a lawyer ; but always as something solid, respectable. He never called himself actor, painter, or writer, knowing well that the simple-minded women whom he wished to attract, would in the main belong to a class that regards all artists with suspicion. He wanted to give an impression of permanence and reliability, and his advertisements achieved that result.

This undersized, feeble, entirely unromantic exploiter of women, had been a criminal for many years before he began to specialize in the crimes that brought him to his death. Born about 1869 of working-class parents, he was singularly religious as a boy. He had a very sweet voice, and sang often in the choir. His manners, even when little more than a child, were gentle, insinuating, subtle.

He became a student of mechanical engineering and showed great enthusiasm for his work, but in spite of this affection for mechanics, he had not the continuity to persist in his studies. For, after performing the

usual military service, he became a clerk in a commercial house.

For thirty years, Henri Landru led a life that was entirely decent. It was not until he had passed the age of thirty that he committed his first crime. It would be futile to speculate concerning this apparently sudden falling-off. It may not have been as sudden as it appeared. It is conceivable that gradually a certain laziness was eating into the brain of Landru, making him loathe any sort of labour. Then, perhaps, some chance newspaper paragraph—some chance word overheard in train or café—may have caused him to turn his thoughts to easy money via the ways of crime.

He had married long since, and throughout all his life of crime, Landru continued to visit his wife and family, who regarded him as a good husband and father. Thus, he lived what is called a double life—inhabiting the underworld of Paris, turning his hand to many specious swindles, and alternately returning home to conduct family prayers and dandle children on his knee.

For the ten years between 1904 and the outbreak of the European madness, Landru was from time to time serving terms of imprisonment. He was thus, it will be clear, the complete jailbird and scoundrel when he emerged from confinement, ready to begin his terrible campaign against middle-aged and elderly women anxious to find husbands.

The problem of the lonely woman is the problem that the woman-exploiter invariably finds a very fascinating



LANDRU

affair. Realizing that there are in every city, thousands of women whose lives are so monotonous, so futile, so gloomy that they will rush to the first way of escape, the woman-victimizer knows that he has only to beckon and they will surely follow. Landru, having had too much experience of the perils of crimes against men, now decided that women would prove a simpler matter.

Coldly, deliberately, he set himself to gain their affections—then to rob and kill them. The whole business was done in good business-like style, and Landru showed himself the perfect clerk in that he kept a ledger wherein he entered the addresses of his victims, and every sou that had been spent in connection with the “courtship.”

In the case of a mass-murderer, it is not always easy to ascertain rigid facts concerning the sequence of crimes, but it is believed that the first murder was committed on the person of Madame Cuchet, a middle-aged housekeeper with an invalid son, whom Landru also despatched. He had prevailed on the stupid creature to lease a house in Vernouillet, and having made himself at home there, he proceeded to rob her of all her savings by a clever trick. After the murder, he sold portions of the furniture, and the episode was ended. No enquiries were made concerning the woman—she had no friends—no relatives. A woman thus isolated may vanish as unobtrusively as a stone flung into the Atlantic. The few persons whom she has known—tradesmen, fellow-lodgers, and other indifferent

acquaintances, seeing her no more, simply tell themselves (if they think about her at all) that she has left the district.

It was this obscurity, this isolation of certain of his potential victims, that emboldened Landru to do what he chose with them. Encouraged by the success of his first murder, he presently made the acquaintance (through advertisement) of a widow, Madame Guillet, who possessed a little money. Landru was easily satisfied. He did not go out of his way to secure big prizes. He believed in turning to profitable account everything that came his way. Madame Guillet was soon disposed of, and after this crime, Landru decided that it would be well if he took for himself a house where he might entertain his victims before arranging their deaths.

To that end, he engaged a villa at Gambais, a village not very far distant from Paris, a village which until the coming of the motor had been a very isolated place. Gambais seemed to him the very dwelling-place of his dreams ; for here he could pose as a well-to-do personage, possessing all the comforts of wealth, and at the same time, the loneliness of the village would enable him to dispose of his victims without arousing suspicions.

To the villa there came a succession of women—the middle-aged, the old, the drab, the disappointed of life. Here the fascinating M. Landru paid them compliments, gave them flowers, entertained them to lunch and dinner, and eventually, if their exchequers tempted him sufficiently, dispatched them swiftly and unobtrusively. The third victim was a woman named Heon, who, until

her meeting with the murderer, had been living in third-rate hotels and pensions. The prospect of home and marriage delighted her, and she walked into the villa at Gambais with the happiness of one who has at last come home. Hardly had she been destroyed when Landru was paying attention to the Widow Collomb. She also came to the quiet villa, and presently vanished as though she had never been.

There followed then a succession of victims. A widow named Jaune, from a Paris suburb; a worn-out *fille de joie* known in her district as "La Belle Mythese"; Madame Labore-Line; Madame Benoit (both of them widows—both of them possessed of just enough money or goods to make their deaths profitable to Landru); a young woman named Andrée Babelay—and many, many more.

With the profits that accrued from his frightful trade, Landru became comparatively well-to-do, and presently he hired an expensive flat in the Rue Rochecouart in Paris. There he set up house with the one woman of his chance friends for whom he appears to have had affection. She was younger than the others— younger and moderately good-looking. To this girl, Fernande Segret, Landru was apparently generous, spending money on her with an open-handedness that was a new experience for the mean little egotist.

This association was the last association with women in the life of Landru. He had a very long run of luck, but the end was now at hand. Taking every sort of

risk, disdaining disguises, going his way boldly enough in Paris and in the country, it is probable that Landru had come to the point reached by many murderers when they foolishly imagine that they are protected by some mystic power. It is this effrontery, this overconfidence, that has brought about the downfall of many criminals.

Had Landru been more careful—had he avoided the public places—all might have been well for him, but wrapped in a heavy coat of egotistical confidence, he went wherever he chose. He might have anticipated that some day he must come in contact with friends or relatives of his victims—people who would at once recognize him—and demand of him what had happened to their mothers, sisters, friends.

And that is precisely what *did* happen on the 12th of April, 1919. On that day Landru was making purchases in a china shop in the Rue de Rivoli, when he was seen and recognized by a Mademoiselle Lacoste, whose sister had disappeared after a short acquaintance with the murderer. By a remarkable coincidence, her friend was a sister of the Madame Collomb, whose death was also brought about by Landru, as we have recorded.

When Mademoiselle Lacoste described the mysterious bearded person to her friend, the latter immediately recalled the facts concerning her sister's disappearance. The fact that two women had vanished thus after making the acquaintance of the man seemed to both women sufficient grounds for a visit to the Bureau of Police.

Lacoste immediately reported the facts to the authorities. The police records were consulted, and very soon

the identity of the little man in the china shop in the Rue de Rivoli was established. Here was the Henri Desiré Landru who, under a dozen false names, had long since been a person known to the police as a professional criminal, though until that time he had not been wanted on the capital charge.

The police lost no time in getting to work. Very soon they had discovered the whereabouts of Landru in the Rue Rochechouart, where he was now known as M. Guillet. The flat was raided, Landru was arrested as he was sitting down to a meal, and the place was searched with the thoroughness which French officials invariably display. Hidden in drawers and desks were many documents, and the famous "ledger" was one of them. Landru on being arrested made no resistance. The professional criminal is a fatalist and rarely shows fight. When his time has come he is frequently resigned.

The presumptive evidence against Landru was clear enough. A large number of women to whom he had made love were known to have vanished after the love-making. But the question that immediately arose—the question that caused all the delay, all the perplexity—was the question of the disposal of the remains.

The many temporary residences of Landru (principally the houses of Vernouillet and Gambais), were searched. They dug, wrenched up flooring, drove their probes into walls, dissected furniture, but found only ashes and fragments of bones (bones that might have been male or female) with a few teeth. It is true that

certain feminine articles such as dress-hooks and hair-pins were discovered amid the debris, but Landru swore that they formed part of rubbish that was already in the house when he arrived there.

A small stove was discovered in one of his temporary dwelling-places. Tests made with the stove proved that it was, of course, capable of consuming a full-sized human body, but that the process would be a very slow affair. A body weighing eight stone would require twenty-four hours for its complete consumption, and dismemberment would have had previously to take place.

That Landru had disposed of many women by means of incineration seemed the most feasible theory, but the theory was never definitely established by evidence, though the inference was practically certain. Romantic writers have endeavoured to reconstruct the crimes of Landru. They have introduced into their ingenious pages meticulous details of stoves and burnings. But the trial elicited nothing of the kind as actual fact, and it says much for the ingenuity of this mass-murderer that he was able to cover up his crimes with such neatness and despatch.

For two and a half years the dreary business of seeking out and examining witnesses continued, and during that time Landru was frequently subjected to long and exhausting examinations by the official known as the "juge d'instruction." We have nothing of the kind in this country. English criminal administration

(in theory, at any rate) does not allow a prisoner awaiting trial to be plied with questions that may affect the issues. He is free to make a statement, but is invariably warned that it will be "taken down in writing and may be used in evidence" against him. The French authorities hold that the truth is better served by their method.

Throughout those thirty months, the Press was filled with stories of the man—all sorts of wild and absurd fictions were invented. One of them was that Landru was a myth—that there was "no such person" as Mrs. Betsy Prig would have phrased it. He was, they suggested, a fabulous figure, invented by the Government to divert the nation from the intricacies and vexations of the Peace Treaty. And whilst, of course, the rumour was as absurd as it was fantastic, there is no doubt that so much had been said, written, and sung about Landru that he was swiftly becoming a personage of the fabulous order. Gradually, the real man faded—instead there rose a sort of cosmic gigantic figure—that had stalked the land, love-making, deceiving, killing.

On the 7th November, 1921, the trial opened at the Assize Court at Versailles. In addition to the indictment of murder, there were many minor indictments in connection with frauds on the alleged victims. The authorities had done their work very thoroughly. They had ascertained from papers at their disposal that Landru had been in intimate correspondence with 283 women. Of these women 273 had been traced. It was assumed, therefore, that ten had met their deaths at

the hands of Landru. He was charged with the murder of those ten, and in addition, with the son of one of them.

The prosecution was conducted by the famous counsel, Maître Godefroy. Landru was defended by Maître Moro-Giafferi, whose efforts to save his client were on the heroic scale.

During the thirty months that had preceded the trial, Landru had shown an obstinate and frequently sullen silence when questioned. "All this is no business of mine," he would say to the officials, "it is *your* duty to ascertain what you want to know. I know nothing of the business and can therefore tell you nothing." However, at the trial, he discarded his reticence, and answered the questions addressed to him with a swiftness, an ingenuity and a plausibility that proved to him to be a man of very considerable brain-power. No fool could have met that terrible cross-examination with such blandness, such coolness, such remarkable evasiveness and inventiveness.

He scored off the counsel more than once with apposite and even witty replies. Asked if he had not had in his possession at one of the houses a book on poisons, he answered at once: "One does not kill people with a book!" "You are an habitual liar, are you not, Landru?" was hurled at him by the counsel, whereupon Landru answered with a smile: "I am not a lawyer, Monsieur!" Sarcasm, humour, bitterness, all these weapons were ready to his lips. Not for a moment did he lose his control—his grasp of the situation.

Sometimes, he assumed an air of gallantry. "I cannot answer that question," he would say with his hand upon his heart, "because it involves the honour of a lady." "Do not probe too deeply, Monsieur. There are certain secrets connected with women which every gentleman must respect." And so on, and so on, this gallant guardian of feminine honour would continue, evidently vastly satisfied with the hypocrisies that leaped so swiftly to this lips.

Villagers who had lived in the district of Gambais were called. Certain of them gave evidence that was to some extent based on hearsay, and would perhaps not have been admitted in an English Criminal Court. There was much talk of mysterious smoke issuing from the villa—of queer smells—of sinister midnight journeys of Landru, when he carried strange parcels. But the evidence thus brought forward was of very little value.

The famous penny notebook wherein Landru was in the habit of recording his transactions with women was, of course, produced. Each woman was referred to by a number. In each case, it was shown by the evidence of the book that he had taken a single ticket for the woman from Paris to the villa, but a return ticket for himself. This evidence was used as a very strong point for the prosecution.

The trial dragged its slow length along. Doctors were called to give evidence as to the sanity or insanity of Landru. One medical witness, who had carefully examined him many years previously when he was in prison, was of opinion that at that time Landru was an

abnormal person, wavering between madness and reason. He was convinced, however, that he was to-day an entirely sane person. His behaviour, his control, and above all the extraordinarily lucid manner wherein he had defended himself, left no room for doubt as to his being entirely sane in the legal sense; that is to say, his mental condition left him responsible for his actions. This view was confirmed by the other medical experts.

The speech for the prosecution made by Maître Godefroy was emotional, almost vindictive. The counsel let himself go, and in an ecstasy of denunciation, quoted poetry, declaiming it as an actor declaims in a theatre. He dealt also with philosophy and with sociology in a way that an English barrister, asking for a conviction, would have deemed rather foolish. But Godefroy knew his jury—and he said exactly the right thing from the standpoint of the counsel who possesses that useful knowledge.

It was a very admirable speech, certainly, if it did not reach the heights achieved by the counsel for the defence. It has been said that very rarely has a speech so remarkable been made in a French Criminal Court. Moro-Giafferi seems to have worked himself up into a condition wherein he actually believed in the innocence of his client. Fascinated, dominated by the hard-won belief, he set himself to perform his difficult task with an enthusiasm and a conviction that were almost overpowering.

The speech lasted for three hours on the first day, and stretched out into the next. To attempt to summarize

this magnificent piece of work would be futile, for a mere summary could give not even a comparatively adequate idea of the power and the ingenuity. Let it suffice if it be said that Moro-Giafferi concentrated mainly on the fact that no body had been found, and that no man must be convicted of murder until such evidence is present. He was ready to admit that Landru had had dealings with many women. He explained those dealings on the grounds that his client had been an agent of the white slave traffic. "A very bad man, certainly, but not a murderer. . . ."

The trial that had filled the Court with one of the most noisy, frivolous and obscene crowds that had been present in a modern court-room, ended during the last week of November. On the last morning, Landru perceiving that certain ladies were being refused admission owing to the crowded state of the room, bowed and said with a smile: "If any lady would like MY place, she can have it." It says much for his extraordinary control and coolness that after a trial that had endured three weeks, he was able to jest and smile.

At 7.30 p.m. the jury retired. They returned after being absent an hour and a half. Landru was found guilty on all indictments except two, these two being in connection with minor frauds. Sentence of death was then passed on him, but before he was removed, his counsel had gone over to the jury box and had begged the jurymen to sign a petition that mercy might be shown to Landru by the Court that would hear his appeal.

The appeal came before the Supreme Court on February 1st, but was of course rejected. A final appeal to the President of the Republic at the end of that month was also set aside.

After this, there could be no more waiting. Nearly three years had passed since the arrest of Landru, and it is probable that during that long period he had come to a point when he had lost fear and was almost bored.

That was the keynote of his behaviour on the morning of February 23rd—the morning that took him to the knife of the guillotine. The place of execution was the Place des Tribunaux at Versailles, and here a big crowd that had assembled, was driven back by the police and soldiers. The execution, however, was seen by those “fortunate” persons whose windows overlooked the place—and doubtless a great deal of money was earned by the sale of tickets of admission to witness the “entertainment!”

Landru died very quietly. When the priest asked him to accept absolution, he waved him aside, saying that he was grateful to the good man, but that he had no use for such ceremonies. He then suggested that the business should be expedited, so that the spectators might not be incommoded by waiting. Beside him, in the procession to the guillotine, walked his faithful counsel, Maître Moro-Giaffieri, and a few seconds before his end, Landru again thanked the barrister for what he had done on his behalf.

There was no pause. All was done very quickly—

very neatly. The body was pushed forward on the plank—the knife crashed and fell. Landru had lived up to the tradition of the professional criminal—he had died without showing fear or resistance.

One may say, also, of this man that he resembled the criminal of all ages and of all races in that he took the line of least resistance. The exploiting of women seemed the most facile way of earning money—it was made easier still by killing them before they became too affectionate or too troublesome. His extraordinary success in covering up his crimes for a comparatively long period was perhaps due not so much to his ingenuity as to the fact that the women were in many cases obscure and friendless, as we have already pointed out. Another fact that helped him was the condition of Paris during the War. A city that is being bombed and air-raided—a city whose inhabitants were daily losing sons, brothers, husbands in a war, cannot perhaps exercise the same vigilance and interest in connection with domestic crime as a city in a time of peace. Landru chose his hour with genius.

So ends this record of a mass-murderer whose crimes were sufficiently sensational to whet the palates of a nation that had not entirely lost its taste for horrors even after the passage of the bloodiest war in history. And here ends also this record of monstrous criminals, a record of deeds so strange, so damnable, that one confesses oneself at a loss to explain them on the smooth

basis supplied by the alienist and the atavist. For it is conceivable that the many theories concerning the criminal temperament will share the fate of other theories—that the plausible belief of to-day will be laughed at to-morrow or the day after.

For perhaps the alienist with his theory of diseased brain-cell is wrong—wrong, too, the atavist with his cave-man theorizing. Call the writer mediæval-minded if you will, accuse him of putting back the clock, of yielding to gross superstition, but nevertheless he holds to the belief that the professional murderer is influenced not subjectively, but *objectively*; that there is a force of evil as objective as a gas, as an explosive, that assails men and women who, by some weak gap in their temperaments, have laid themselves open to the assault. And it is perhaps that force which controls them—that urges them upon the road that ends with a cross-beam and a rope!

